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Broken Brotherhood:
Understanding Child Sexual Abuse by
Marist Brothers and Former Marist Brothers
in Australia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to interview four Marist brothers and four former Marist brothers who had abused children to ascertain their understanding of the factors that contributed to the abuse. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used as the methodology for the research, using semi-structured interviews. The findings were interpreted in the light of the reports of commissions of inquiry and psychological research. The findings supported the view that abuse by clerics is a complex phenomenon that involves personal, situational, organisational, and environmental factors. The results are consistent with the findings from published qualitative research with priests and brothers, and the data from commissions of inquiry, including the importance of opportunity as a significant factor in the abuse of children by clerics.

This is the first research project where the participants were all members of the same Roman Catholic religious order of brothers, and from the same country. The results were explored from the perspective of the vocation of brotherhood and, in particular, Marist brotherhood. St Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers, was opposed to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect, and established rules to prevent the abuse of children and to protect the brothers from the temptations of inappropriate behaviour. The regulations regarding relations with pupils and how to live a life of chastity from the time of the Founder until the mid-20th century were explored, especially the changes that took place at the time of Vatican II (1963–65) that led to significant developments in the theology and vocation of brothers in the Church. These developments enabled the Marist Brothers to respond to the abuse crisis by benefiting from insights from psychology and counselling, and from developments in theology, as well as by extending the mission and spirituality of the Marist Brothers to lay men and women.

The themes of guilt, shame, redemption, membership, identity, loss, and belonging were explored from the perspective of psychology. Moral injury was proposed as a concept that could be applied to victims, secondary victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, as all felt betrayed and lost trust in individuals in leadership and in the Church as an institution. One of the implications of this research is that clerical status is not a significant variable regarding the abuse of children by priests and brothers. The research also showed that individuals are able to build new lives and identities and live meaningful lives after discovery and imprisonment. Brotherhood as a value and (for some) an identity, continues to have validity whether they continue to live as Marist brothers, leave, or are dismissed from the Order.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

support, academic critique, encouragement at difficult moments, and belief in the value of this research, demonstrated their interest throughout the course of this research and, importantly, provided fuel when the tank was close to empty. They provided important suggestions and a space for conversation about the issues raised by this research, and shared relevant books and articles.

My final thanks are for the four Marist brothers and four former Marist brothers who agreed to participate in this research. Their openness to be interviewed about a topic that was a source of shame and pain in their lives required remarkable humility and courage, and this is something that I never took for granted. All of the participants expressed regret for their behaviour and expressed apologies to their victims and to the Marist Brothers. They also spoke of their desire to participate in this research as a way to offer some reparation for the damage they had caused. I hope that the results of the research will enable them to feel vindicated and rewarded for the considerable personal risk they took when they embraced their own vulnerability and agreed to participate in this research, trusting that the outcome would lead to a safer Church and Marist Institute, despite the personal cost involved.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Brendan Geary

Signature:

CHAPTER 1

BROKEN BROTHERHOOD

Understanding Child Sexual Abuse by Marist Brothers and Former
Brothers in Australia

1.1   Introduction

I am a member of the Marist Brothers, a Roman Catholic religious order of
lay religious brothers that was founded in France by St Marcellin
Champagnat on 2 January 1817. I joined the order in August 1975 and
trained as a teacher. In 1998 I had the opportunity to train as a pastoral
counsellor at Loyola College in Maryland (1998–2003). In September
2000 I worked as a psychotherapist at the National Institute for the Study,
Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Trauma[1] in Baltimore, Maryland,
where I worked with people who had committed sexual offences. I also
worked with victims of child sexual abuse with Baltimore Social Services.

In 2006 I was elected as a member of the Provincial Council of the Marist
Province of West Central Europe, and in 2010 I was appointed as
Provincial. From 2006 until 2019, when my term as Provincial ended, I
was involved in responding to cases of abuse in Ireland, Scotland, The
Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, ensuring that each country had
safeguarding policies, raising awareness of these issues with the members
of the Province, and engaging with the statutory and Church authorities
when audits were undertaken. In 2017 and 2019 I represented the Marist
Brothers at the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.[2]

In the course of my life, I had met some people who were victims of child

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[1] See: the National Institute for the Study, Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Trauma
website at: http://www.fredberlinmd.com/index.html. Accessed 20 December 2021.
[2] Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry: https://childabuseinquiry.scot. Accessed 20 December
2021.

sexual abuse and knew that it could have a profound impact on people in their later lives. My work with sex offenders opened up a new dimension of this complex phenomenon. My aim as a therapist was to help the clients to engage with their past, make choices that led to behavioural change, and lead good and productive lives as citizens. As a member of a religious order, and consistent with my own values and convictions, I believed that victims should be treated with compassion and dignity, but also that those members who abused should be called to account for their behaviour and offered the means to engage in therapy and either to leave the religious order that they had joined with support to live good lives, or to remain as members with worthwhile work that did not involve contact with children.

The child sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church became an international news story in early 2002 when *The Boston Globe* newspaper revealed the number of priests in Boston archdiocese who had abused children and the way that the Church protected abusers, concealed important information, took an adversarial approach to victims and their families, and prioritised the protection of the assets of the Church (*Boston Globe*, 2002). Since that time, there have been Church and government reports, professional studies, criminal cases, and news and media reports about the sexual abuse of children by clergy and lay religious in every continent of the world.

1.2   Locus as a Researcher

In 2003 I defended a dissertation on the relationship between spirituality and well-being in sex offenders (Geary, Ciarrocchi, & Scheers, 2004). As a member of the Boundary Breaking Project of the Centre for Catholic Studies of Durham University,[3] I was keen to promote research into this area to lead to better understanding of this crisis and what may have contributed to the abuse of children by Catholic clergy.

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[3] See: https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/catholic-studies/research/boundary-breaking-/.

In 2013 the Australian government established a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Brother Peter Carroll, Provincial of the Marist Brothers in Australia, offered a full and unreserved apology to victims of sexual abuse by Marist brothers in Australia.[4] In his witness statement of 8 September 2016, he proposed that he would initiate a research project:

> To try to establish why sexual abuse by brothers was so prominent over so many years across the order.[5]

This proposal led to the establishment of a Round Table discussion (Bland & West, 2017) that was held over two days in May 2017, with the following aims:

1. To develop a consensus among stakeholders about the reasons for abuse of children in the Marist schools in the time period covered by the Royal Commission. Specifically: why did abuse happen in Marist schools?
2. To identify learnings from the exploration of abuse to inform the future work of the Marist Brothers.
3. To promote healing in the Marist Brothers community.

Those who participated in the Round Table received a literature review regarding theories of sexual offending and then heard from four men who self-identified as survivors of sexual abuse from Marist schools. Professor Stephen Smallbone (criminology), Associate Professor Carolyn Quadrio (psychiatry), and Dr Kathleen McPhillips (sociology) offered perspectives from their own academic disciplines. Some Marist brothers then spoke about the culture of the Marist Brothers in Australia, and Brother Peter

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[4] See: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5476accbe4b040577c92fdc7/t/5a36e98a53450a165 1f2d814/1513548171823/MB-Statement-RoyalCommission-.

[5] Carroll, Peter Gerard (8 September 2016). *Witness Statement.* Retrieved from: https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/CTJH.500.90001.0160. pdf. Accessed 30 March 2021.

Carroll ended the Round Table by offering his own reflections on the sexual abuse of minors by Australian Marist brothers. Brother Peter Carroll offered apologies to victims and prepared a response to the findings of the Royal Commission.[6]

The purpose of the report of the Round Table discussion was "to outline discussions and summarize the contributions made by all key stakeholders in this process" (Bland & West, 2017). Arguably, one group of stakeholders was not represented: the men who had abused. This is understandable, bearing in mind the sensitivities of the other participants, particularly those who were victims of sexual abuse. The participation and involvement of men who had abused would have had to be handled very carefully and it would potentially have become a different kind of event.[7]

The Round Table discussion and the investigations into child abuse in the Catholic Church took place in the wider context of revelations about sexual abuse and the response of the Vatican. In his *Letter to the Catholics of Ireland* of 19 March 2010, Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

> Only by examining carefully the many elements that gave rise to the present crisis can a clear-sighted diagnosis of its causes be undertaken, and effective remedies be found. (Benedict (19 March 2010))

In the light of the stated aims of Brother Peter Carroll to undertake research into the sexual abuse of children in Marist schools in Australia,

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[6] The Marist Brothers in Australia have offered apologies to victims and released a response to the findings of the Royal Commission. The press releases and statements of apology can be found on the Australian Marist Brothers Web Site: https://www.maristbrothers.org.au/media-releases-2.

[7] An event with the participation of victims and perpetrators was organised by the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University from 21–23 January 2015, where two victims and four perpetrators participated along with 60 other invitees. A mental health professional was nominated to liaise with the groups of victims/survivors and perpetrators. This event was carefully prepared beforehand and led to some significant conversations between some of the victims/survivors and perpetrators who were present, all of whom found the event beneficial. Such events require careful preparation and the involvement of skilled facilitators.

and Pope Benedict's proposal that it is necessary to examine all the elements that gave rise to the crisis, I proposed to undertake research with Marist brothers who had abused children after I finished my term as Provincial in April 2019. Brother Peter Carroll accepted my proposal.

As a Marist brother, I was also concerned to explore the experience of brotherhood of the men who abused to understand better: their attraction to join the Marist Brothers, their formation and lives as brothers, the circumstances in which they betrayed the values of the Marist Brothers when they abused children, and how the Marist Brothers responded to them in the light of the discovery of their abusive behaviour. From a theological and psychological perspective, I was also interested to explore how the lived experience of being a Marist brother may have contributed to the abuse, and how the theology of brotherhood, the Marist tradition of brotherhood, and current developments within the Marist Brothers and the Church might offer a way forward for a religious order that has been deeply affected by the tragedy of child sexual abuse. This perspective was influenced by Joseph Chinnici O.F.M.'s book, *When values collide* (2010), in which he reflected on his experience as Provincial of the Santa Barbara Province of the Franciscans in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the light of the Franciscan tradition. Chinnici wrote (2010, p. 12):

> This present work will return frequently to this Augustinian-Franciscan spiritual and theological inheritance as providing a much longer frame of meaning to help us in our current pilgrimage. I realize there are other viable traditions of interpretation. I present the one with which I am most familiar to show that the contemporary Church possesses in the storehouse of collective memory ideas, concepts, approaches, and experiences of faith from the past that give us life for the present.

Regarding the Marist Brothers, in this dissertation I propose:

- To reflect on the sexual abuse of children, particularly from the

perspective of brotherhood and, in the case of the participants in this study, Marist brotherhood;

- To examine the importance given to the care and protection of children in the life and teachings of St Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers (1789–1840);

- To examine Champagnat's understanding of brotherhood and how that understanding developed in the Marist Brothers in the light of the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965);

- To show that the Marist Brothers have in their collective memory a "storehouse of concepts, approaches, and experiences of faith" that can be a resource and a way forward for the present.

I will now look at the broader context of the growing awareness of sexual abuse in society and the Church, beginning with a definition of what is understood by the term "child abuse." I will then:

- Introduce the topic of child sexual abuse in the history of the Catholic Church;

- Provide a brief summary of current knowledge about abuse by clergy;

- Provide an introduction to brotherhood as a vocation in the Catholic Church;

- Give a brief description of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) and what was learned about abuse by Marist brothers;

- Provide a summary of the aims of this research project;

- Share the responses of the participants to "Broken Brotherhood" as the proposed title for this dissertation;

- Introduce the idea of "moral injury."

I will conclude with an outline of the remaining chapters of the

dissertation.

1.3   What is Child Abuse?

Since this research study concerns abuse that took place in Australia, I will make use of the definitions and discussion points that are found on the Australian government's Institute of Family Studies Resource Sheet *What is child abuse and neglect?* (2018), which begins by raising awareness of the difference between a child and a young person, as "young people" often have a greater capacity to make their own decisions and may be able to indicate personal desires and preferences even if they are under 18 years of age, the age until which people are legally children in Australia. The Family Studies Resource Sheet offers definitions of physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to family violence, as well as sexual abuse. Given the focus of this research study, I will concentrate on the definition that is offered for sexual abuse.

Definitions exist for different purposes. For example, legal definitions may need to be broad in order to encompass a range of situations and behaviours, while medical and scientific definitions may be more detailed and precise as they are developed and applied by academics or specialists who want to think carefully about specific aspects of abuse (Institute of Family Studies Resource Sheet, 2018, p. 2). Educational or campaigning groups may use definitions which are more general, in order to communicate simply and clearly for the benefit of the general public and possible victims.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Children (NSPCC) in the United Kingdom proposes the following definition:

> Child abuse is when a child is intentionally harmed by an adult or another child—it can be over a period of time but can also be a one-off action. It can be physical, sexual or emotional and it can happen

in person or online. It can also be a lack of love, care and attention—this is neglect.[8]

This is a clear and helpful definition, but there are significant nuances that are lacking in this statement.

The World Health Organization (WHO) offers the following definition (World Health Organization, 2006, p. 9):

> All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

The NSPCC definition states that abuse occurs when a child is intentionally harmed, whereas the WHO definition focuses on the actual or *potential* harm to the child. The NSPCC extends the concept of abuse to online behaviour (which could be covered by the WHO use of the words "other exploitation" though it is not as clear as the NSPCC definition in this regard) but fails to indicate that harm to the child's dignity may be sufficient to decide that abuse has taken place. These are important differences, as a child may say that they do not feel that they were being abused or exploited at the time of the abuse or later. Harm to the dignity of the child can be recognised independently from the perception of abuse by the child or the intention of the perpetrator. This focus on the child's inherent dignity reflects the theological belief in the intrinsic value of the child (Mk. 10: 13–16, Lk. 17: 1–2), and is consistent with the position found in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989):[9]

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[8] See: "What is child abuse?" NSPCC: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse. Accessed 24 January 2022.

[9] See: Convention on the Rights of the Child. (November 1989). Retrieved from: https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx. Accessed 25 January 2022.

> All children have rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor, or the type of family they come from. (Article 2)

Article 34 explicitly protects children from sexual abuse:

> State governments and other relevant parties shall undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

The Convention on the Rights of The Child came into force on 2 September 1990. According to the Humanium website (January 2022), 196 states have ratified the document, making it the international document that enjoys most support in the area of the protection of children.

The WHO definition of child abuse does not explicitly require that a child has suffered actual harm before an act or series of behaviours is seen as abuse. Abuse can take place where the potential for harm is recognised. The WHO definition helpfully addresses the context of abuse, which takes place where there is an imbalance of power in the relationship between the child and the perpetrator.

In its conclusion, the Family Studies Resource Sheet (p. 14) acknowledges that determining child abuse or neglect is not always a straightforward task, especially when there are cultural issues involved. For example, what may be acceptable behaviour for a family in their country of origin, may be considered as abuse in the country where they have emigrated. This is a source of tension in countries like the United Kingdom where some families from the Indian subcontinent regard choice of marriage partners and age at which marriage can take place as matters for the parents and not for the child/young person. As noted above, there are also difficult issues

about the threshold for what constitutes abuse, ability to predict significant harm in the future, and the age and capacity for consent of the victim, especially when there are only a few years difference in age between the young person who is under 18 years of age and legally a child, and the older person, who may be aged between 18 and 20 years.

The WHO (2006, p. 6) defines sexual abuse as:

> The involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are—by virtue of their age or stage of development—in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim.

This definition acknowledges that the child may lack a capacity to understand what is involved in a relationship that has a sexual component. The majority of victims of priests and brothers were between 9–14 years of age (Chapter 3), where they would not be expected to have this level of emotional and sexual knowledge. For that reason, even if the perpetrator believed that the young person had taken the initiative or did not say "no" to the behaviour, they are deemed not able to give consent. This is partly due to the difference in the power relationship, as in all the cases that are part of this research study the perpetrator was older and in a position of trust and responsibility. The behaviours were against the laws in the states where the incidents took place and were contrary to the values and rules of the Marist Brothers (Chapter 2).

1.4   Sexual Abuse as a Complex Reality

A significant majority of abusers are men, but there are also female offenders. Most abuse of children takes place in the home, or by family

members, but that does not explain or excuse the devastating impact and prevalence of abuse by trusted individuals—especially in church and religious contexts—in the lives of young people.

Some men who abuse can be given the psychiatric diagnosis of paedophilia, as they have a preferential erotic interest in prepubescent children. (The role of sexual deviance and paraphilic disorders in clerical abuse will be discussed in Chapter 3). There are homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual men who abuse children. (The issue of sexual orientation and abuse will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8). There are also men who claim to be sex addicts, and who engage in sexual activity with a range of partners, as well as online. Some offenders find opportunities that present themselves in the course of their work or ministry to exploit the needs of young people, who are often emotionally vulnerable or have no protectors. Many perpetrators report being under stress or of not having age-appropriate outlets for intimate or sexual relationships. Given the range of factors involved, it is important to avoid any temptation to make simplistic assessments of this problem.

1.4.1 History of the Sexual Abuse of Children in the Catholic Church.

Child sexual abuse is not a recent phenomenon in the Catholic Church. The second canon of the Didache (also known as *the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*), one of the earliest Christian documents, which may have been written at some point between 65–80 C.E., condemns sexual relations between men and boys in article 2:2 (Hoole, 1894):

> Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not corrupt youth; thou shalt not commit fornication.

The relevant section is variously translated as "Thou shalt not commit sodomy," (*Didache,* (Late First–early Second Century C.E.)) "Thou shalt

not corrupt boys" (Spence, 1888), or "Thou shalt not commit pederasty" (Wayne, 2016)." Whichever translation is preferred, it is clear that sexual relations between adult men and youths were condemned from the earliest days of the Christian Church. Doyle, Sipe, and Wall (2006, pp. 4 – 660), Geary (2011), and Cahill and Wilkinson (2017, pp. 37-54) have noted cases of the sexual abuse of children throughout the history of the Catholic Church. Cahill and Wilkinson provide information about the sexual abuse of children by clerics in the history of the Catholic Church in Australia (2017, pp. 99–118). Research on historical cases of abuse in the Marist Brothers has recently been published (Geary, 2024). Ferrarini (2021) traced the teachings of Superiors General of the Marist Brothers regarding relations with students and the means they used to support the brothers in their commitment to celibacy (Chapter 2).

The surviving documentary evidence presents a picture of vigilance and condemnation of homosexual relations, and the exploitation of children (especially boys) in monastic formation (Elliott, 2020), boys and young men in seminaries and formation houses for religious life, and (for boys and girls) in pastoral settings (e.g., the confessional).

1.4.2 Child Sexual Abuse in the Recent History of the Catholic Church

In October 1985, Fr Gilbert Gauthé, a Roman Catholic priest of the diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, USA, pleaded guilty to charges of the sexual abuse of boys and possession of child abusive images of his victims, and was given a 20-year prison sentence (*Boston Globe*, 2002, pp. 37–38). Since the conviction of Gilbert Gauthé, there has been a series of revelations of the sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Church in all five continents. More revelations emerged in Canada in 1989 regarding the sexual abuse of children at Mount Cashel Orphanage in Newfoundland (Harris, 1990), which was run by the Congregation of the Christian Brothers. The Mount Cashel scandal led to the establishment of a

Royal Commission in Canada (Hughes, S.H.S., 1990) that exposed a pattern of the cover up of the sexual abuse of children and collusion between the Justice Department and the Christian Brothers.

The public fall-out of the revelations of the abuse of children in the archdiocese of Boston in February 2002 led to the adoption of the Dallas Charter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the United States, and the establishment of a Review Group that published its report on 27 February 2004 (National Review Board, 2004). This was followed by the three reports by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York that provided a thorough and detailed analysis of the nature and scope of the sexual abuse of children by priests and deacons in the Catholic Church in the United States. The first report was published in 2004 (John Jay, 2004), with a supplementary report in 2006, and a report on the causes and context of the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests in the United States between 1950–2010 (John Jay, 2011).

Revelations of child abuse scandals in Ireland led to a series of reports: Ferns (2005), Ryan (2009), Murphy (2009), and Cloyne (2011). These reports provided information about the prevalence of abuse and the ways that the Catholic Church as an institution covered up the abuse, used various legal means to shield itself from the legitimate concerns of victims and their families, protected the Church's name, reputation, and assets, and did little to stop abusers from repeating their offences (Flannery, 2009).

Revelations of child sexual abuse in society and the Churches led to the establishment of the Deetman Inquiry in The Netherlands (Deetman, 2011), the Royal Commission in Australia (November 2012), the Independent Inquiry in England and Wales (2014), the Child Abuse Inquiry in Scotland (S.C.A.I., 2015), the Royal Commission in New Zealand (2018), the German Inquiry (Dreßing, 2019), the Independent Commission on Abuse in the Church in France (CIASE, 2022), an independent commission in Portugal (Roberts, 2023) and the report of the Ombudsman in Spain (2023, October).

In Chapter 3, I will share the data that is currently available on significant aspects of the abuse of children by clergy:

- Prevalence rates by clerical abusers;
- Prevalence rates of abuse by religious brothers;
- The gender of victims;
- The age of victims;
- Sexual deviance and clerical offenders;
- Clerical offenders as an atypical group.

In Chapter 8, I will discuss the findings in the light of current psychological theories about child sexual abuse and the available qualitative data on clergy and religious brothers who have abused children.

1.5 Clarification of the Terms Brother, Religious, and Cleric

"Clergy" refers to men who are ordained in the Catholic Church: deacons, priests, and bishops. "Brothers," who are the focus of this dissertation, are not members of the clergy. There are priests who are members of dioceses, often referred to as "secular" clergy, to distinguish them from the priests who are members of religious orders, who are referred to as "regular" clergy, to denote their commitment to live under a rule (derived from the Latin word "regula," meaning rule). Along with ordained monks and members of religious orders, brothers profess the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Monks, priests who are members of religious orders, and members of religious orders who are not ordained, including nuns (enclosed women) and religious sisters, are known as "religious." While there have been sisters who have been found guilty of abuse, this dissertation will focus on priests and male members of religious orders. Brothers are described as "lay religious," since they have not been

ordained. Brothers, as lay religious, are not technically clergy but they will be termed clergy for the purposes of this research due to their status.

There are therefore four groups who are often contained within the generic term "clergy:" priests who are ordained to work in a diocese (secular clergy), vowed religious who are ordained, brothers who are vowed members of religious orders that also have ordained members, and brothers who are vowed members of religious orders that do not have ordained members, as is the case with the Marist Brothers.

Like clerics, brothers undergo a long period of religious formation that involves living in a dedicated building/location with other people in training (novitiate), accepting a celibate commitment, studying theology, and developing a spiritual life. They also usually undergo professional training related to the work of their religious order. The word "clergy" or the phrase "clerical offenders" will be used when it makes sense to refer to all groups of ordained men and vowed male religious at the same time. Priests and brothers will be referred to separately when it is important to distinguish between the groups. There are also bishops and cardinals who have abused, but since they have all been ordained, they will be included in the generic terms "clergy" or "priests."

The word "brother" will be used in lower case when referring to brothers as individuals or groups of brothers, in a similar way as references to priests or sisters. Upper case "Brother" will be used when a particular brother is named (e.g., Brother Charles Howard), or when referring to "The Marist Brothers" as a religious institute. The Marist Brothers is a Religious Institute in Catholic canon law, but the words "order" and "congregation" will also be used as these words are commonly used in writing and discussion of religious institutes.

1.5.1 Brotherhood

Being a brother has been a core part of my personal identity and the context in which I have lived my life. Membership of the Marist Brothers offered me a way of living a meaningful, worthwhile life that included aspiring to serve God, being of service to others, and opportunities for work that I have found stimulating and rewarding. "Brotherhood" as a religious and theological value resonated with my own values of promoting equality and opportunity for all, especially those who were in lower socio-economic groups, like my own ancestors who emigrated from Ireland to Scotland between 1856 and the early 1900s.

This dissertation concerns the sexual abuse of boys by men who were members of a religious order of brothers, which was dedicated to the education and welfare of children. As such, their religious vocation and their lives and identities as brothers are a central focus of this research project. These aspects of their lives will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 8. The participants in this research project were Marist brothers at the time of their offences. They experienced formation in the Marist Institute, where "brotherhood" was presented as a vocation in the Church and an important role, as it was a way of advancing the Church's educational and evangelising mission. It is also a word that expressed the nature of their relationships with each other, as well as the quality of fraternal care that should characterise their interaction with children.

They worked alongside other Marist brothers who shared these values and who had developed traditions that attempted to express the value of brotherhood in community living and educational leadership. The participants had a combination of good experiences as well as difficult and sometimes humiliating experiences, or times when they were not listened to, which affected them in their growth and development (Chapter 5). Whatever their experiences, they chose to remain as brothers, and it is within the context of their religious lives that they abused boys.

Being a brother essentially means sharing power with others, whereas sexual abuse involves exploiting power that is held over others. The participants in this study exploited the power and status of being a "brother" to abuse boys, over whom they were in authority. The boys were in positions of vulnerability, and they needed—and were entitled to—the care, support, and protection of the brothers who had responsibility for their education and residential care.

Four Marist brothers and four former Marist brothers who had abused children agreed to participate in this study. The result of their behaviour involved loss of opportunity to be involved in ministry as well as restrictions in their lives as brothers. For those who left the Marist Brothers there were consequences in terms of reporting to statutory authorities and restrictions in employment opportunities, as well as carrying the burden of the memory of their behaviour and the public experience of shame that was a consequence of discovery, exposure, and criminal trial. These issues will be explored in Chapter 5 with a reflection from the perspective of psychology in Chapter 8.

Brotherhood is an important theme in the Gospels, and there is a rich history of the development of the role and identity of brothers in religious life in the Catholic Church and in the Marist Brothers. The Catholic Church is organised as a hierarchy, and brothers do not sit comfortably in the hierarchical structure of the Church. They are not clerics, yet their training, religious consecration, and status mean that they are not lay people in the ordinary sense of that word. Tom O'Donoghue (2021, p. 131) quoted S.M. Schneider (2000) who wrote:

> Like the clergy, they lived apart from other Catholics, wore distinguishing garb, were addressed by special titles, carried on full-time ministries which they were assigned by ecclesiastical authorities, and which guaranteed their livelihood. They were essentially unaccountable to the laity they served, enjoyed

sacralised (though not canonical) authority in relation to the laity,
and most importantly, did not marry . . . they were for all practical
purposes second-class clergy rather than (even first-class) laity.

This ambiguity that is inherent in the vocation of a brother in the Church
led to a crisis, partly as a result of the Second Vatican Council, which
highlighted the universal call to holiness and the role of lay people in the
apostolate. The small trickle of brothers leaving religious life in the 1950s
became a flood of departures in the years after the Vatican Council
(Lanfrey, 2016, p. 371; O'Donoghue, 2012, p. 131).[10] This led to more
reflection on the role and identity of brothers, and the publication of the
document, *Brother in Lay Religious Institutes* by the Union of Superiors
General in Rome in 1991. The first Vatican Document on brothers, entitled
Identity and Mission of Brothers in the Church, was published in 2015.

Chinnici (2010) explores the tension between belonging to the institutional
Church while embracing a theology of equality and brotherhood in the
Franciscan tradition. He explored how a development of a theology of
brotherhood could provide a way forward for the Franciscan family, by
returning to their identity as brothers, to include men and women,
particularly professionals who possess skills, knowledge, experiences, and
perspectives that the community does not possess, to find a way forward
out of the crisis. Developments in the Marist Brothers in the past 30 years
have followed a similar path and this will be explored in Chapter 9.

In Chapter 2, I will reflect on brotherhood in the New Testament and the
challenge of celibacy for those who left society to live as brothers in
monastic communities in the early Church, particularly the temptations
presented by the presence of "beardless youths." After a brief reference to
the foundation of orders of teaching brothers in the eighteenth and

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[10] Lanfrey argues that the crisis began before Vatican II and demonstrates this by sharing
the data about brothers in temporary and final profession who left the institute. The
numbers of those who left rose consistently from 1958 onwards—four years before the
opening of Vatican II. Lanfrey writes that the figures "snowballed" between 1968–1973
(2016, p.373).

nineteenth centuries, I will reflect specifically on the Marist Brothers. I will examine:

- Marcellin Champagnat's motivation for founding an order of teaching brothers;
- The significance of brotherhood in Champagnat's vision for his Institute;
- Champagnat's teachings on the care of children;
- How the theology of brotherhood changed during the years when the participants entered the Marist Brothers and the years during which the abuse took place;
- How the theology of brotherhood went through a period of change in the Church and in the Marist Brothers in a way that is significantly different from the semi-monastic identity that was presented until the changes brought about by Vatican II.

In this way I hope it will become evident that brotherhood provides an important theological and ecclesial perspective for this study.

1.5.2 The Marist Brothers and the Australian Royal Commission

The Australian Royal Commission (ARC) examined claims that had been made against the Australian Catholic Church. Of the total claims made by victims, 78% came from men and 22% from women. There were 500 perpetrators whose names remain unknown as they could not be identified. A total of 78% of claims came from men and 22% from women. Regarding the religious orders where all the members were brothers, 97% of claims were from men who were abused as boys. The average age at the time of abuse was 10.5 for girls and 11.6 for boys. On average, there was a time lapse of 33 years between the date of the alleged abuse and the date when the claim was made (ARC, 2017).

A total of 597 of the men (32%) who were identified as perpetrators of abuse were religious brothers, and 154 Marist brothers had allegations made against them between 1980 and 2015. A total of 1,050 Marist brothers served in Australia between 1950 and 2015. According to the Royal Commission, there were credible allegations of sexual abuse against 20% of the Marist brothers who served in Australia between 1950 and 2010. The Royal Commission revealed that 486 people made claims against the Marist Brothers, and this represents a quarter of all claims received by religious institutions (Smith & Wilkins, 2019).

As mentioned above, the Marist Brothers in Australia involved victims/survivors in the Round Table process that took place in May 2017 to learn about the causes of abuse by Australian Marist brothers. With regard to the Marist response to victims/survivors, support is being provided, including financial support, of an established victim/survivors network (Clergy Abused Network based in Newcastle). A social worker has been made available to respond if a victim/survivor personally contacts the Marist Province and a senior brother responds personally when a direct pastoral response or pastoral session is requested. The Brothers have dedicated memorials to victims/survivors at Marist schools in Canberra, Newcastle, and at Hunters Hill, Sydney, and an annual Day of Remembrance and Repentance is organised for victims/survivors of sexual abuse in Marist ministries.

1.6   The Use of Reports of Commissions of Inquiry in this Study

The impact of media reports of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church have led to a number of official or Church inquiries. The reports of some of these commissions of inquiry will be used throughout this study, particularly in Chapters 3, 7 and 8.

Miller (2025) has written a careful critique of the John Jay (USA), Irish, Australian, IICSA (England and Wales), French, German (Dreßing), New Zealand, Spanish, and Italian inquiries. She describes the John Jay report as "superior" (2025, p. 217), as it was the only study that excluded "implausible allegations," and carefully avoided the use of ambiguous language regarding the use of the word "alleged" with regard to allegations and perpetrators. The John Jay report provided 20 categories of offences, and, like the Irish reports, considered the nature of the offences in detail. The Australian Inquiry, by contrast, did not differentiate the seriousness of offences. The John Jay report provides detailed breakdown of allegations by age and gender of victim, and geographic location, and attempts to distinguish between different types of offenders. Consequently, I have made significant use of the John Jay data in this research study.

The Australian Commission of Inquiry was particularly useful as it relates to the social and ecclesial context in which the participants in this study lived and worked. The Australian Inquiry also undertook a thorough study of factors in relation to the Catholic Church that provided context and analysis which support the findings of this research. The French (CIASE) and German (Dreßing) reports provide data based on interviews with perpetrators of abuse. This data was particularly useful when discussing paedophilia and homosexuality as factors that may have contributed to the abuse. The three case studies of the Marists, Christian Brothers, and Benedictines produced by the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry made it possible to offer tentative comparative data regarding abuse by brothers and priests. Other reports, e.g., the Ferns Report, the Report of the Spanish Ombudsman, and the New Zealand Report, were referenced when a specific aspect of their report or conclusions provided support for findings from this study. These wider references helped to broaden the understanding of the phenomenon of abuse beyond the Australian and Marist contexts.

1.7   The Current Study

This research will enable the voice of men who committed abuse to be heard. Hopefully this will contribute to a better understanding of this complex and disturbing phenomenon. It is also hoped that by listening to the experience of these men that it might be possible to understand the ways in which Marist brotherhood, Marist religious and school culture, and the experience of Marist formation, community life, and ministry may have contributed to the abuse carried out by these men (Chapters 7 and 9).

By exploring this topic from the perspective of brotherhood, I hope to bring to the crisis of child sexual abuse by Marist brothers the insights and perspectives from the Gospel tradition of shared brotherhood and sisterhood, the religious life tradition of being brothers to one another as part of a community of equals, albeit with different roles and responsibilities, and the Marist experience of being a brother to children and confreres.

The third stated aim of the May 2017 Round Table was to bring healing to the Marist Brothers' community. This aim can be extended to this research project as it was hoped that, while reopening painful memories and revisiting events that were a source of pain and sadness for the Marist Brothers in Australia, this research project might provide a platform for discussion and some healing of these difficult and delicate subjects. It was also hoped that for the perpetrators, whose behaviour had caused hurt and suffering to others, and which was a source of personal distress, guilt, and shame, that contributing to research and sharing their story with a trusted individual might be a source of personal growth and some healing as part of their own journeys. In Chapter 8 I will share the reflections of the participants regarding how they have rebuilt their lives in the shadow of the abuse, the losses they experienced as a result, and the ways they have worked to create new, positive identities for themselves.

1.7.1 Summary of the Aims of this Research Study

The following aims have been identified for this research study:

- To enable the voice of four Marist brothers and four former Marist brothers who abused children to be heard, and to contribute to a better understanding of child sexual abuse (Chapters 5 – 8).
- To reflect on the sexual abuse of children, particularly from the perspective of brotherhood, and, in the case of the participants in this study, Marist brotherhood (Chapters 2, 3, 6, and 7).
- Examining Marist history and the importance given to the care and protection of children in the life and teachings of St Marcellin Champagnat (Chapter 2).
- To explore St Marcellin Champagnat's understanding of brotherhood and how the understanding and theology of brotherhood developed in the light of the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).
- To explore the Marist Brothers' history and tradition in relation to the protection of children and the means used in the past to support the brothers to live their life of chastity (Chapter 2).

This research project is focused on brothers who abused, but the victims of abuse have never been far from my thoughts. My motivation for undertaking this research has been to increase our knowledge and understanding of abuse by brothers in order to prevent abuse from happening in the future. During the third interview, Bernard made the following comment:

> I remember my lawyer, who's handled a lot of these cases, was defending a person that pleaded guilty and he explained to the court about this person's childhood and what led to the abuse, the offending behaviour . . . and the mother of the child who'd been

abused years ago came up to him after the court and said, "Thank you so much because I now understand what leads to abuse, that it's not just evil." (Bernard, 3, 752–762)

Reading this research may not bring healing to victims, and it may even cause distress as it may remind them of their own abuse; but I hope it may provide some understanding of what can lead members of a religious order to abuse children. Hopefully an increase in understanding may have positive benefits for them.

1.7.2 Broken Brotherhood

The authors of *The Cross of the Moment* (Jones, Pound, & Sexton, 2024), in their final report of a three-year research project investigating the child sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church in England and Wales, wrote that:

> It is a crisis because it has tested and, in some ways, broken crucial parts of what we thought we knew about ourselves as a Catholic community. (p. 7)

The same is true of the impact of the sexual abuse by brothers on the Institute of the Marist Brothers. "Brotherhood" emerged as a key perspective for the research project in the course of analysing the data from the participants. The idea of brokenness seemed appropriate given the impact on those who were abused and their families, on the Marist brothers who did not abuse, as well as on the Marist Brothers as a respected institute of educators in the Church, on the Church in Australia, and on the participants who were responsible for the abuse, and their families and former students.

The participants had a deep sense of belonging to the Marist Institute (Chapter 5), were committed to its goals and values, and had bonds of

loyalty and affection with other members. (In order to protect
confidentiality, the participants were assigned names in alphabetical order
in which they were interviewed. A description of the participants as a
group will be presented in Chapter 4). The impact of the discovery of their
abuse on their sense of identity and belonging to the Marist Brothers is
discussed in Chapters 5 and 8. The word "broken" seemed to capture the
sense of the loss of something fragile, valuable, and sacred which occurred
as a result of the abuse. It also contained the possibility that something that
had been broken could be repaired in some way.

1.7.2.1   *The Participants' Response to the Proposed Title "Broken Brotherhood"*

The second set of interviews that took place in October 2022 (Chapter 4)
provided an opportunity to ask the participants about "Broken
Brotherhood" as the proposed title. (Some biographical information and
the use of anonymised names for the participants will be explained in
Chapter 4. Information about the system for referencing the excerpts from
the transcripts is found in footnote 11). The seven participants who were
alive at the time of the second interview replied as follows:

> "Spot on. . . . Because the whole concept of brotherhood is a united
> . . . thing . . . it's as though the very thing that took me away from
> it, what you're talking about is embracing me like a parent who
> says, "Don't do it again." (Andrew, 7, p. 26, 19–35)[11]

When asked what had been broken, Andrew replied, "If you had a pen I'd
tell you half a dozen. Honestly . . . I can't find words. . . . The very person

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[11] The references to the texts of the interviews have been presented as follows: After the
interviewee's name the number of the interview (or phone conversation) has been entered
in chronological order of interview. This is followed by the line references, with the
exception of the interviews that took place in October 2022 as the line numbering began
afresh on each new page of the transcription text (lines 1–52). It was therefore necessary
to insert the page and line references for the final set of interviews.

who set out to show affection with the kids and so on. I am the broken person." When asked if anyone else was broken in this story, he replied, "Brothers . . . the Church, my own family, and the families of the kids." Andrew immediately thinks of his own brokenness, and then extends the metaphor to others who were affected by the abuse.

When asked about whether the proposed title seemed appropriate, Bernard replied:

> It does . . . because we are broken men. And we'll always be broken to an extent . . . But the abuse came from our brokenness. . . . And to me betrayal means I chose to betray . . . I never chose to betray. . . . It came from brokenness. (Bernard, 4, p. 26, 3–11)

Bernard also began by focusing on the brokenness of the perpetrators, and then reflected on how the abuse emerged from the personal emotional and psychological brokenness of the brothers and former brothers who abused children. In Chapter 6, the findings are presented that relate to the participants' understanding of the factors that led to the abuse, including aspects of their own childhoods and deficits in their lives that may have contributed to their abusive behaviour.

Christopher replied to the proposed title in an email:

> I think is a good choice because it sums up what I will try to express below. Brotherhood is what attracted me to the Marist Brothers. I experienced such a strong sense of it as a student and in my time in the Brothers. Everything from working and relaxing together to prayers together. Jubilees, funerals all gave me a strong sense of belonging. A real sense of identity and brotherhood. Broken also sums up the reality of some community and formation experiences. Also, the almost unwritten expectation of being able to cope with everything (mostly in myself and not always superiors) and a reluctance to not be seen as not coping. This led to

the behaviours (avoidance and compensations) that created more brokenness (my victims). It is hard to put into words the depth of that brokenness and hurt it has caused. (Email, 25 October 2022)

Christopher, who had more time to give a considered response, was able to locate the brokenness in himself and in the consequences of his behaviour. He also wrote about the way that his behaviour led to his loss of membership of the Marist Institute, his role and identity as a brother, and the significant moments he experienced as a brother that had great meaning for him. These themes will be explored in more depth in Chapter 8.

Dennis's response came from a different perspective from the first three participants:

My immediate reaction to that is that [it] challenges me because there's an organisation in Australia called 'Broken Rites.'. . . And they're a malicious, terrible organisation and they really . . . strip you to the bone. . . .But Broken Brotherhood could then be seen as a different stance to Broken Rites . . . that's got a complete sense of "it's broken but it's not rejected. It's broken and can be repaired." . . . I mean, I consider it could well be a title and it could work. I just had that first reaction. (Dennis, 4, p. 29, 2–19)

"Broken Rites"[12] is a non-profit organisation that has been doing research on clerical abuse in the Australian Church since 1993. It provides support and advocacy for victims of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Australia. The organisation has exposed abuse and has a website where it posts information about bishops, priests, and brothers who have been accused and/or found guilty of child sexual abuse.

For Dennis, this organisation immediately provoked feelings of anger and

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[12] See: http://www.brokenrites.org.au/drupal/. Accessed 9 February 2024.

resentment. This can be seen, for example, in his use of the word "pariahs" (Dennis, 4, p. 29, line 17) to describe priests and brothers against whom there have been allegations of sexual abuse of children who are the focus of attention of the Broken Rites team. He wrestles with this feeling and then arrives at a point where he can make sense of the proposed title in terms of something that is "broken but not rejected," and that can be "repaired," highlighting his own desire to rebuild something of his own life despite the pain of what he had done.

Frank began with a reflection on what had been broken in his own life, and then focused on what he had lost:

> All my initial further and wonder and joy and hope of being a brotherly brother, . . . has been broken. No matter what, whatever way I look at life now . . . like you've mentioned before about not being able to meet with young children, not being able to, . . . do lots of things, wear the habit. I'm barred from The Marist Association, and other things. . . . And not being able to have ministry which I'm good at. I'm barred from that. That's a broken Brotherhood. (Frank, 3, p. 19, 47, p. 20, 13)

Frank then stepped back and said he needed time to think as it did not resonate with him entirely:

> I needed to spend a little time thinking about that because it didn't gel straightaway . . . but my brotherhood has been broken and (will) never come back. Never come back to the way I had hoped in the beginning. That's what broken means. . . . It doesn't mean to say it's non-existent in Australia. (Frank, 3, p. 20, 17–25)

Frank is conscious of the loss of aspects of brotherhood in his life at present. As will be seen in Chapter 5, Frank spoke positively about his experience of brotherhood, including after his behaviour was revealed, and when he returned from prison. The themes of identity and loss will be

discussed in Chapter 8.

Howard immediately reacted positively:

> Yeah, I, I like it. I like it a lot. There's a strength to it and . . . a way
> forward in "Brotherhood." And "Broken" roots it back to the
> humanity . . . that we experience and the pain to move on from.
> Yeah, I like it. (Howard, 4, p. 25, 39–45)

Howard picked up both aspects of the proposed title: first, the concept of
"brotherhood," which offers a way forward out of the pain of the abuse
and its consequences, and secondly the brokenness, which situates the
research in the shared human experience of pain that was part of the reality
of everyone who was affected by the abuse.

The responses of the participants confirmed my intuition about the title,
and they anticipated some of the key themes that emerged in the research
and that will be explored in the three chapters of findings (5–7) and the
reflection on the themes in the light of psychological research in Chapter
8. Dennis's first negative response illustrates the pain, rejection, exposure,
feeling of being hounded, and shame that the participants have lived with
as they try to rebuild their lives.

1.7.3 Moral Injury

Bernard used the word "betrayal" and Christopher said that "broken"
captured something about aspects of his formation and community
experiences, as well as the excessive demands made in ministry and the
fear of being seen as failing in any way. He suggested that these demands
may have led to compensatory behaviours, including the abuse. Betrayal
by those in authority and contravening personal moral standards are the
focus of writing and research in what is now referred to as moral injury.

This perspective has the potential to encompass all actors in the tragedy of abuse: victims, secondary victims, bystanders, and perpetrators. Moral injury provides a valuable theological perspective with which to reflect on the abuse crisis in the Marist Brothers and will be discussed in Chapter 9.

1.8   The Structure of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I will reflect on the theme of brotherhood, which provides a religious and ecclesial perspective for this dissertation. Beginning with the New Testament and moving through the early monastic movements, the chapter will focus on the development of religious orders of brothers, and the Marist Brothers in particular.

In Chapter 3, I will share prevalence data on clerical abuse, focusing on abuse by religious brothers, asking, from the available data, if brothers are more or less prone to abuse children than priests. I will look at the gender and age of victims, and issues related to sexual deviance as a factor in understanding clerical offenders, and on ways that clerical offenders can be considered as an atypical group in relation to other men who abuse children.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss the methodology that was used in this dissertation, with a brief description of the participants.

In Chapters 5–7, the findings from the analysis of the 30 hours of interviews with the eight participants will be shared:

5. The experience of Marist brotherhood;
6. The factors identified by the participants that help them to explain how the abuse happened;
7. Aspects of the Marist culture, organisation, and system that may have contributed to the abuse.

In Chapter 8, I will explore some of the key findings from Chapters 5–7 in the light of psychological theories and research. I will also discuss research findings from other qualitative research projects on priests and brothers who abused children. The chapter will end with the findings from the participants regarding spirituality and how they attempted to make sense of their experience. It will also show how they have attempted to rebuild their lives after discovery and imprisonment.

In Chapter 9, the key findings from the research will be summarised and distinctive features of this research project will be highlighted. I will also reflect on how the theology of brotherhood has developed since Vatican II, specifically in the Marist Brothers. The abuse crisis became a significant issue for religious orders of brothers when the process of redefining their identity was already under way (late 1990s–2000s). I will show how the developments in the theology of brotherhood, and reclaiming insights about safeguarding from the founder, St Marcellin Champagnat, with the benefit of learning about the protection of children and vulnerable adults in society and the Church, came at a fortuitous moment, providing a healthy way forward for brothers and those whom they sought to serve. I will also explore the issue of abuse in a religious order from the perspective of moral injury and the question of "the limits of membership." The chapter ends with a reference to Pope Francis' Encyclical *Fratelli tutti: On fraternity and social friendship* (2020) where Pope Francis invites the whole Church to rediscover the Gospel value of brotherhood for the good of the Church and the world.

CHAPTER 2
READING THE RESEARCH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BROTHERHOOD AND MARIST BROTHERHOOD

Analysis of the interviews with the participants opened up the possibility of reading the research from the perspective of brotherhood. This enables us to better understand the religious culture the participants were part of. Brotherhood also offers a window through which to view historically and theologically the religious world in which the abuse took place. The Institute of the Marist Brothers has its own history in relation to the care and protection of children. This provides an important historical lens through which to reflect on the behaviour of members of this religious order. The findings that relate to the participants' experience of Marist brotherhood will be presented in Chapters 5 and 7.

The outline of the chapter is as follows:

- A reflection on the ideal of brotherhood that is presented in the New Testament;
- The beginnings of religious brotherhood, focusing on the challenge of celibacy in early monasticism;
- Marcellin Champagnat and the foundation of the Marist Brothers;
- Champagnat's experiences and values, which show that safeguarding, as we now understand it, was central to his religious and educational vision;
- The development of thinking about the identity and vocation of brothers in the Church and the Marist Brothers in the years after Vatican II (1962–1965).

Lastly, I will explore what was taking place in the Marist Institute during the time when the participants in this study were involved in formation and ministry. I hope to show that the identity of being a brother was being questioned and re-examined during this period, leading to new understandings about the vocation, ministry, and identity of Marist brotherhood.

2.1   Brotherhood in the New Testament

In St Mark's Gospel (Mk. 3:33–35), Jesus asks, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" He states, "Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother." Dunn (2003) makes the point that Mark deliberately contrasts Jesus' blood family who are outside, and who think he is mentally unwell, with his new family—those who are listening to his teaching—who are on the inside. This incident appears quite early in Mark's Gospel, and Raymond Brown (1997) writes that now that the proclamation of the kingdom has begun, that Jesus' natural family has been replaced by his new family composed of those who do the will of God. Dunn counsels against drawing too strong a distinction between Jesus' natural and new families. He mentions the saying found in Mk 10:29–30 about leaving "house or brothers or sisters, or father or children or the fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel" and the passages in Luke (10:34–36) and Matthew (12. 51–53) about bringing division to families. But Dunn also quotes other passages that show the ongoing family relationships in the early Christian community. Dunn concludes (p. 598):

> Positive though the imagery of discipleship as new family is, therefore, it should not be pressed into too sharp a contrast with responsibility to birth-family.

Crossan takes a more radical view and writes about Jesus' "savage attack" (1994, p. 66) on the family. Crossan illustrates his point by quoting four passages. The first is from the Gospel of Thomas (1994, p. 66):

> Jesus said, "Whoever does not hate father and mother cannot be a follower of me, and whoever does not hate brothers and sisters . . . will not be worthy of me.

Crossan quotes Mk. 3: 33–35, which was discussed above, and Luke 11:27–28:

> A woman from the crowd spoke up and said to him, "How fortunate is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" But he said, "How fortunate, rather, are those who listen to God's teaching and observe it."

Crossan's final passage is Luke 12: 51–53 (1994, p. 66):

> Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now, a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three; father opposed to son, son against father, mother to daughter and daughter to mother, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law, daughter-in-law to mother-in-law." (New Jerusalem Bible)

Crossan contrasts the importance of membership of a family in the Mediterranean world with Jesus' establishment of a new set of relationships in the Kingdom of God. He notes that the conflict and division is *across* generations and not *within* generations: father against son, and daughter against mother etc. Crossan suggests that the issue is about power and not about faith (1994, p. 67):

> The family is society in miniature, the place where we first and most deeply learn how to love and be loved, hate and be hated,

> help and be helped, abuse and be abused. . . . His ideal group is . . .
> the Kingdom of God, and it negates that terrible abuse of power
> that is power's dark spectre and lethal shadow.

Fraternal relationships are ones where power is shared, as all are sons and daughters of the same Father. This is significant in the context of abuse by religious brothers, as the gospel roots of brotherhood eschewed any abuse of power as a sign of a new way of relating, that is, a sign of membership of God's kingdom.

Being a brother is also a sign of inclusiveness. Crossan highlights Jesus' practice of table commensality as a sign of the radical inclusiveness that is central to the gospel message. He writes (1994, p. 78):

> The Kingdom of God as a process of open commensality, of a non-
> discriminating table depicting in miniature a non-discriminating
> society, clashes fundamentally with honour and shame, those basic
> values of ancient Mediterranean culture and society.

Crossan writes that Jesus' teaching and practice may appear as "quaintly eccentric" or "charmingly iconoclastic" (1994, p. 79). It is, however, the sign of a radical egalitarianism that rejects discrimination between people (1994, p. 79). The table as a symbol of inclusiveness emerged as a key part of Marist identity and spirituality in the early 21st century (Chapter 9). The limits of inclusivity for members of the Order were called into question by the abuse crisis.

After the narrative of Saul's conversion in Acts, the disciple Ananias is instructed by the Lord to meet Saul, as he is to be the Lord's chosen instrument of evangelization. Ananias is sceptical, but goes to meet Saul (Acts: 9: 17–19):

> Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus—
> who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has

sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy
Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes,
and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after
taking some food, he regained his strength.

The first word that is addressed to Saul is "brother," which is an indication
of his membership in the new Christian family. N.T. Wright, commenting
on this episode, writes (2018, p. 56):

> From the very start—from the teaching of Jesus himself—the
> members of this strange new group regarded one another as
> "family" in a world where family meant a lot more than it does in
> most Western cultures today. Even before Saul has been baptized,
> Ananias recognizes him as part of what anthropologists call a
> "fictive kinship group."

At that point most members of the Christian kinship group were Jews; but
very soon the young group would be challenged to include gentiles as part
of their new family. This did not happen without difficulties as the new
group forged its new identity, partly in contradistinction to the Jewish faith
from which it emerged (rejection from the synagogue). Part of this new
identity was about being brothers and sisters in Christ, where "There is no
longer Jew nor Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no male or
female; you are all one in the Messiah, Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). As Wright
points out, this sentence from the letter to the Galatians was 15 years into
the future, but the use of the word "brother" to address Saul at the
beginning of his Christian journey is a clear sign of his change in relational
status, which also foretold the direction (and a significant part of the
message) of his ministry. St Paul often refers to the people to whom he
addresses his letters as his "brothers" (for instance Rms. 10:1, 16:17, 1
Cor. 1:10, 3:1, 2 Cor. 8:1, Gal. 1:11). This further supports the significance
of the relationship denoted by the word "brother," which is a fundamental
characteristic of the new community founded by Christ and promoted by
St Paul across the Mediterranean world.

The author of the letters of St John likewise addresses his community as brothers (1 John. 3:13). In 1 John 4:19 the author wrote:

> Whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

This verse directly relates love of one's brothers (and sisters) with love of God and being a member of the Christian community.

2.2   The Monastic Origins of Religious Brotherhood and the Challenge of Celibacy

The origins of religious life in the Catholic Church can be traced to the individuals who moved to the Egyptian and Syrian deserts in the third century CE to live a more austere and gospel-based life. Individuals gradually came together to form groups that became monasteries. They lived an ascetical life of simplicity, with a commitment to celibacy, under the leadership of an abbot. Celibate living was a challenge for some of these men. There are stories in the Sayings of the Desert Fathers of the devious ways that the devil would tempt those who attempted to live this life (Merton, 1960).

Peter Brown (1988, p. 217) notes that these monastic communities were like villages, and represented attempts to build a new society, a "counter-world" to replace the one from which the monks had fled. However, these brotherhoods found that the temptations of the flesh accompanied them to the desert. Brown notes that there were often boys living in the monasteries, who had been donated by pious families as "*ex voto* offerings" (Brown, p. 248). "The sense of sexual danger that lurked in the bodies of the monks weighed most heavily on the novices" (Brown, p. 248). The issue of religious brotherhood, of men vowed to prayer and

celibacy, and the abuse of boys in religious communities were present from the beginning of the monastic movement.

Morris (2016) discusses the issue of sexual attraction in the Greek monasteries as an attraction to "beardless youths." He writes:

> Boys were beautiful in part because of their androgynous appearance but also because they were available, unlike most women and young girls, who were sequestered away from society in the privacy of their family homes. (Morris, 2016, p. 17)

Morris quotes Paphnutius, an early monastic founder, who was said to have refused to "admit a boy because his face was too much like a woman's" (p. 19). Morris writes, "once the boys grew beards, they were no longer 'beautiful' and dangerous, nor could they continue to stir up desire, thus making them safe to admit to the monastic enclosure" (p. 28). Morris gives numerous examples where there were injunctions against "beardless boys," and that the threshold of 10 years of age seemed to be where this began. He adds, "These prohibitions are testimony to the overwhelming power of sex and the human need for love and intimacy, in some form, to satisfy that longing" (p. 41), which can be seen in the transcripts of the men who took part in this study (see Chapter 6).

Elliott (2020) analysed documentary evidence from the fourth until the 15th centuries of the abuse of boys in monasteries. She demonstrates that the abuse of boys was present in monastic life. Her research shows that the practice of protecting clerics from allegations and the consequences of abuse was present in the early centuries of the Church. Regarding abuse by monks, she wrote, "It is possible that many clerics turned to boys in order to fill the emotional and physical void left behind by the departure of wives and children" (2020, p. 213).

2.2.1 Orders of Brothers

Only two fully lay congregations were founded before 1800, the Alexian Brothers (1305) and the Brothers of the Christian Schools,[13] known as the De La Salle Brothers (1641).[14] Hostie (1972) lists a further 25 lay congregations of brothers that were founded in the 19th century. These groups were often founded for the education of youth, and ran institutions for boys, including boarding colleges, orphanages, reformatories, and industrial schools. De La Salle codified his educational principles in *Le Conduit des Écoles.*[15] He regarded the work of the brothers as a specific ministry in the Church, and not simply an adjunct to the work of priests. The De La Salle Brothers were suppressed during the French Revolution but were restored in 1802.

2.2.2 The Foundation of the Marist Brothers

The foundation of orders of brothers specifically dedicated to teaching was part of a wider movement of the foundation of apostolic religious orders which, as mentioned above, were often founded with a specific aim, e.g., teaching, nursing, care of the poor, care of the elderly, or work on the missions. Marcellin Champagnat was born in 1789, the year of the French Revolution. When he was sent to school at around 10 years of age, he saw another student being struck by the teacher. This incident had a profound effect on him. He later responded to the appeal in the diocese of Lyon for young men to become priests. According to notes written by Fr Bourdin

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[13] The Brothers of the Christian Schools (*Les Fréres Chrétiens des Écoles*) were founded in France by St Jean Baptiste de la Salle in 1641 and will be referred to in the text as "De La Salle Brothers." The Congregation of the Christian Brothers, founded by Edmund Ignatius Rice in Ireland in 1802, and sometimes referred to as The Irish Christian Brothers or the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers, will be referred to as "The Christian Brothers."

[14] The Brothers of St John of God were founded in 1540, but they have a number of ordained members to provide priestly services for their own communities and institutions. The ordained members are not allowed to take on positions of authority within the community.

[15] *Le Conduit des Écoles* was originally produced in manuscript form in 1706 and was revised constantly. It was published posthumously in 1720. An English translation of the 1935 edition can be found at: https://lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Conduct-2007-reprint.pdf. Accessed 6 January 2022.

SM when he spent time at the Hermitage (1828–1831), the Marist "Mother House" which opened in 1825, Fr Champagnat entertained the idea of establishing a small oratory and "to give his all to this work" (Lanfrey, 2015, p. 67). Clearly, even as a seminarian (1812–1816), he had been pondering the idea of establishing a group of men who would live a spiritual life and engage in some form of apostolic activity.

Champagnat was part of a group of young seminarians, gathered by Jean-Claude Courveille in the senior seminary of St Irenaeus in Lyon in 1814–1816, who dreamed of founding a Society of Mary that would, in some way, replace the Society of Jesus that had been suppressed in 1773 (though it was restored in 1814). The group envisaged a society of priests and sisters and a third order of lay people. Champagnat insisted on the need for a group of teaching brothers, which had its origins in his poor experience of school, and his unformed thoughts of establishing an oratory. The task of establishing the branch of teaching brothers was confided to Champagnat.[16] The group of 12 newly ordained priests and seminarians made a vow to found a Society of Mary at the shrine of Fourvière in Lyon on 23 July 1816. Champagnat was appointed to the parish of La Valla in the Gier Valley and arrived there on 13 August 1816. Within five months he had recruited two young men who agreed to become the first Marist brothers.

2.2.3 Champagnat's Brothers

Br Jean-Baptiste's *Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat* (Furet, 1856) presents a smooth, linear narrative from the birth of

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[16] The idea of having a branch of teaching brothers was not part of the original plan that was discussed by the group of young seminarians in Lyon. This was Champagnat's idea. According to Brother Jean-Baptiste, Marcellin's biographer, "No one disputed the wisdom of having Brothers, but since their existence had not been envisaged in the plan of the new Society, the constant repetition, 'We must have Brothers,' was not taken very seriously. In the end, Marcellin was told, 'Well, since it was your idea, you see to it.' He willingly accepted the task and from that moment his determination, his plans, and his efforts were all focussed on founding the work of the Brothers." Furet, (1856, 1989). *Life of Blessed Marcellin Joseph Benedict Champagnat,* Marist Brothers: Rome, p. 28.

Marcellin to the foundation of the Marist Institute on 2 January 1817. Recent research suggests that the foundation was less straightforward. Between 1817 and 1825 Champagnat's vision and plan evolved from establishing a small "oratory" of motivated young men who were prepared to support his efforts locally to improve religious education, to the establishment of an order of brothers similar to the De La Salle Brothers (Lanfrey, 2024).

By 1825, with the building of the Hermitage (Figure 2-1), a five-storey building constructed in a secluded area, around a central courtyard, with a source of water and agricultural land, the growing community adopted a religious way of life, with formation, vows, religious dress, and a clear purpose: the Christian education of youth, particularly in poor areas of rural France.

Marcellin understood the work of a brother as a specific ministry in the Church, something that his own superior, Fr Colin, never fully understood (Taylor (2018), pp. 362, 414, 502 – 503). Issues of identity, vocation, mission, and status in the Church were not new to the Marist Institute but were part of the foundation story. Sadly, this story was homogenised, giving the impression of a smooth, seamless narrative. When similar questions surfaced in the 1950s and were heightened in the 1960s as a result of changes that were initiated at Vatican Council II, the Marist Institute had few spiritual, theological, or historical resources to call on as it grappled with change and made efforts to understand and articulate a new understanding of the vocation and identity of Marist Brothers (Lanfrey, 2016, pp. 361–363, 377–378).

Figure 2-1

L'Hermitage, St Chamond, France (1835).

2.3 The Marist Project and the Care of Children.

A historical understanding of the importance of the care of children in the founding vision of St Marcellin Champagnat provides an important lens through which to reflect on the subsequent history of the Marist Institute in relation to how it responded to the abuse or neglect of children, and how men who were members could ever have abused children.

In a letter to Queen Marie-Amélie of France in May 1835, Champagnat wrote about his motivation to found the Marist Brothers:

> I was assigned to a town in the district of St Chamond [Loire].
> What I saw with my own eyes in that new post, with reference to
> the education of young people, reminded me of the difficulties I
> had experienced myself at their age, for lack of teachers. I therefore
> quickly carried out the project I already had in mind to establish an
> association of teaching brothers for the rural towns, very many of

which, for lack of financial resources, cannot afford the Brothers of the Christian Schools. (Sester, 1989, Letter 59)

Marcellin's poor experience of education was a significant part of his motivation to found the Marist Brothers. The catalyst that led to taking a more intentional approach to the organisational and religious identity of the fledgling group of parish catechists he had attracted to work with him was his awareness and concern at the reality of spiritual neglect he encountered in the years 1817–1819 when, in the course of his pastoral duties, he met young people who were dying who knew little of faith, God, or the Church, due to the impact of the French Revolution in this area.

Regarding the care and protection of children, Br Jean-Baptiste, his biographer, wrote an account of the shock he experienced when he witnessed a boy being struck by a teacher:

> On his first day of attendance, as he was very timid and didn't leave the place he was given, the teacher called him to his side to read; but just as he arrived another pupil took up a position in front of him. Then the teacher, somewhat angered and perhaps thinking that he would please young Marcellin, vigorously boxed the ears of the child who wanted to read first and sent him off sobbing to the back of the room. . . . Marcellin's discerning mind was indignant at this cruel act and he vowed never to return to a school run by such a teacher . . . at the first opportunity, the same could happen to him. . . . He was unwilling to return to that teacher in spite of the reiterated entreaties of his parents. (Furet, 1989, pp. 5–6)

It is likely that Champagnat remained at school for another two years after this incident, but it had a lasting impact, which could be described today as an experience of moral injury. The sense of shock and betrayal of important values by a person in authority that he had experienced undermined his trust in this person and led him to question his attendance at school. This early experience was reflected in the rules he established

for the brothers in 1837 under which physical punishment was forbidden. Commenting on this aspect of Fr Champagnat's teaching, Br Jean-Baptiste wrote:

> To prevent corporal punishment, excessive severity and any kind of extreme in reproving the children, he did not want them to be chastised at the very time of the misdemeanour; his fear, no doubt, was that quickness of temper, lack of reflection, or the reaction that might be experienced at seeing a child fail in his duty, could lead the teacher to exaggerate the fault and overdo the punishment. So opposed was he to corporal punishment that he even made efforts to prevent it happening accidentally or in an unguarded moment of irritation. For this reason, the pointers used to indicate letters and numbers or reading and arithmetic charts were to be attached with a string, making it impossible to strike the children with them. (Furet, 1989, p. 530)

Marcellin Champagnat was a practical man and not a great theoretician or spiritual writer. He borrowed some educational ideas from Jean Baptiste De La Salle. In his book, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (1720), De La Salle allowed for the use of the ferule (small leather strap) for minor misdemeanours, and of the rod for a series of more serious offences. At the end of this section of the book De La Salle wrote (1720, pp. 138–139):

> These corrections should be administered with great moderation and presence of mind. Ordinarily, no more than three blows should be given. If it is sometimes necessary to go beyond this number, never more than five should be given without a special permission from the Director.

Champagnat copied the simultaneous method for teaching groups of children from De La Salle, and this was codified in the Teacher's Guide of 1853. Champagnat did not copy De La Salle's rules and practices regarding corporal punishment, and this is evident in the Rule of 1837,

which was published three years before Champagnat's death in 1840. Champagnat would have agreed with De La Salle about exercising punishment "with great moderation and presence of mind." However, unlike De La Salle, he stipulated clearly that there should be no recourse to physical punishment in Marist schools under any circumstances.

Jean-Claude Colin, the Founder of the Marist Fathers,[17] and Champagnat's religious superior, wrote instructions for the staff of the minor seminary in Belley, where he was appointed as superior by Bishop Devie in 1829. Colin, like Champagnat, did not allow for the use of corporal punishment (72:17):

> Never any insulting remark humiliating for a pupil; much patience, forbearance, never an act of violence, never a punishment in the heat of the moment. (Drouilly, 1990, p. 182)

Later in the document Colin made a list of specific punishments with graded levels of severity: corporal punishment was not among the options that he listed.[18]

Edmund Ignatius Rice, who founded the Congregation of Christian Brothers in Ireland in 1808, was also opposed to physical punishment. He wrote in 1820 that "unless for some faults which rarely occur, corporal

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[17] As well as the Institute of the Marist Brothers (officially known as the Little Brothers of Mary, or The Marist Brothers of the Schools), there is also a clerical religious order known as the Marist Fathers, whose official name is the Society of Mary, which has ordained members and lay brothers. This group was founded in July 1816, one year before the Marist Brothers, who were founded in January 1817. Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers, was a member of the founding group of Marist Fathers and the first person who was named as a Provincial of the Society of Mary. They are, however, two different religious orders in the Catholic Church.

[18] Colin wrote his *Instructions* in 1829. Marcellin Champagnat had already founded the Marist Brothers and had established many schools by that date. Despite being separated by a distance of more than 100 kilometres to the east (Belley) and west (St Chamond) of the city of Lyon, they were in regular contact by letter and personal meetings (Taylor, 2018). Drouilly, in his book on the *Instructions,* identifies a range of sources and influences on Colin's educational thinking (1990, p. 18). He refers to Champagnat as one of a number of founders of congregations of teaching brothers in France in the early 19th century (1990, p. 4), but does not discuss similarities or possible points of contact in educational thinking between the two Marist founders.

punishment is never inflicted" (Ryan Report, 2009, 6.04). Sadly, the Institute he founded abandoned this value and acquired a reputation for severe physical punishment in its schools and institutions.

Champagnat was sensitive to the emotional damage that could be done to a child. He witnessed a child who suffered because he was given a nickname by a priest, and he instructed the brothers never to use nicknames with the students. In Chapter V of his Rule of 1837 (p. 38), he wrote: "No one shall be called by a nickname." Fr Colin also issued the same instruction (Drouilly, 1990, p. 164, 30:15).

Champagnat was aware of the need to protect children, and this awareness extended to the area of sexual abuse. Two incidents are recorded in the *Life of Blessed Marcellin* where he became aware of sexual abuse by postulants. In both instances he dismissed the postulant immediately. The second incident took place sometime after 1825:

> The Founder, having learnt of it at 10 o'clock in the evening . . . could not bring himself to leave the culprit in the house till the next day; he therefore made him get up and dismissed him immediately. The young man begged him on his knees to be allowed to spend the night in some corner of the house or in the stable, arguing that it was too late to find accommodation elsewhere. "No, no!" insisted the Founder," for as long as you are here, I shall tremble with fear that the curse of God may fall upon us." While speaking he hurried him out the door and closed it. (Furet, 1989, p. 410)

Champagnat was a rigorist[19] when it came to matters of purity and sexual behaviour, and this incident shows that he reacted with alacrity—and not a little drama—in responding to a fault in this area. Jean-Claude Colin

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[19] André Lanfrey, personal communication, 17 October 2023: "Champagnat's attitude to sexual matters is extremely demanding of the brothers. The 'horror of sin' that he instilled in them was in fact largely the horror of impure sin (see *Life*, Part 2, Ch. XIII). Moreover, as a good rigorist, he made a clear link between impiety and impurity; between impurity and loss of vocation."

shared his concerns about potential immoral behaviour between students, and between staff and students, and wrote clear instructions to the staff at Belley that reflected Champagnat's concerns in this area. He wrote about "warding off with special care all dangerous relationships" (2), protecting children from "untold dangerous occasions" (12:9), not taking pupils to the rooms of the priests (12:6), the danger of "particular friendships" (33:3), and of the need to be vigilant during walks in the countryside (52:1) (Drouilly, 1990, pp. 154–174). Colin and Champagnat evidently shared similar concerns regarding the potential for moral harm to children and the need for clear rules and vigilance.

Champagnat's concern about the potential moral problems when bringing postulants and children together under one roof can be seen in a letter written to Bishop Devie of Belley in 1839. Bishop Devie wanted Champagnat to run a boarding school in St Didier-sur-Chalaronne, and hoped it could also serve as a novitiate. Champagnat was against the idea, which he said could "cause obvious harm to everyone." Commenting on this letter, Lanfrey notes:

> It is not difficult to understand what this "obvious harm" means: moral problems sometimes, like the one mentioned in the *Life* at the time of the construction of L'Hermitage; but more generally the promiscuity between brothers, postulants, novices, boarders, external persons who caused the temptation for novices and even brothers, to return to previous ways of behaving, not to mention the almost impossibility of imposing there an ordered way of life. (Lanfrey, 2024, p. 4)

Champagnat's concern about physical and sexual abuse is also referenced in a chapter of *Avis, Leçons, Sentences et Instructions* (1868*),* a collection of sayings of the Founder collected by Br Jean-Baptiste, his biographer. Champagnat was very concerned about "purity."[20] This book was one of

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[20] There are aspects of normal adolescent and young adult development which would have been judged severely in the early 19th century but would be regarded differently today.

the key texts in Marist formation until the 1960s. It contains an interesting chapter entitled "The kinds of brothers Fr Champagnat did not like." Ten kinds of brothers are mentioned including "brothers who are "nannies" because "they lack dignity, they caress the children suggestively and spoil their character," and "brothers who are executioners" (Furet, 1868, pp. 59–60). The word used for nannies is *"bonne,"* which suggests something like a nurse or carer. Champagnat clearly is concerned about brothers who are inappropriately tactile and affectionate with children. Regarding "brothers who are like executioners," he said, "What a terrible defect it is to slap children or to strike them with one's hand, the signal, or the pointer, to pull their ears or hair!" These quotations from the Founder, in rather striking and memorable language, demonstrate the importance of the care and protection of children as part of his conception of what it meant to be a brother.

Marcellin Champagnat, as a result of experiences in childhood and in his ministry, and in his formation and supervision of the young group of Marist recruits, put the care and protection of children from physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect at the core of his vocational and educational project. Accordingly, Marist brotherhood cannot be understood without reference to the safeguarding of children, as we would understand this word today.

The Church gave official approval to the Marist Brothers, officially known as the Little Brothers of Mary, as a religious order on 9 January 1863 (Lanfrey, 2015, p. 244), when it was recognised as an autonomous lay institute of Pontifical Right. The decree also gave them a second alternative name as "The Marist Brothers of the Schools" in recognition of their vocation and identity as teachers.

Similarly, any sexual contact between males would have been a source of concern and current understandings about different kinds of sexual behaviours (what is age-appropriate and what constitutes abuse, for example) would not have been part of the thinking at that time. Taylor (2018, p. 479) notes that Jean-Claude Colin thought some of Champagnat's ideas were "too rigid on certain points."

2.3.1 The Experience of the Marist Institute after the Death of the Founder

Champagnat died in 1840, and he bequeathed to the brothers a vocational identity that gave them a sense of dignity and worth as religious educators, even though they were often looked down upon and not understood because they were not ordained priests. Despite Champagnat's clear teaching about physical punishment and abuse, the General Chapter of 1852–1854 allowed the use of the ferule (small leather strap) to discipline children. The debate on the use of the ferule was the most contested session of the chapter and was only passed by 18 votes to 14 (Lanfrey, 2015, p. 214). Despite the theological ideal of brotherhood, De La Salle's presentation of the vocation of a teaching brother as a ministry, and Champagnat's teaching about the care of children, there were incidents of physical and sexual abuse of children in France between the death of the Founder and the expulsion of the Marist Brothers from France in 1903 as a result of the anti-religious legislation of 1901. There were also instances of physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect in other countries in the course of the history of the Marist Institute (Geary, 2024).

Ferrarini (2021, p. 31) traced the teachings of Marist Superiors General[21] regarding relations with students. While fraternity, as seen in an attitude of trust, openness, respect, civility, honesty, tenderness, and a welcoming disposition, should be hallmarks of the Marist educator, there was a recurrent concern about brothers who were over-familiar with students. Brothers were advised to have a certain reserve in their relations. They were not allowed to touch the students or to use the familiar "tu" when addressing them ("tutoyer"). The brothers were to see themselves as guardian angels of the students, protecting them from harm.

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[21] The following brothers led the Marist Institute from 1839: Fr François (1839–1860), Br Louis-Marie (1960–1879), Br Nestor (1880–1883), Br Théophane (1983–1907), Br Stratonique (1907–1920), Br Diogène 1920–1942), Br Léonidas (1946–1958), Br Charles-Raphaël (1858–1967), Br Basilio Rueda (1967–1985), Br Charles Howard (1985–1993), Br Benito Arbués (1993–2001), Br Seán Sammon (2001–2009), Br Emili Turú (2009–2017), Br Ernesto Sánchez Barba (2017).

The superiors were concerned to protect the children and their innocence, and to support the brothers to live the life of chastity to which they had committed themselves. Terms such as chastity, sexuality, paedophilia, or child abuse were not used at that time. To protect their virtue, the brothers were advised to make use of prayer, the practice of prudence, maintaining a firm but paternal discipline, being a good teacher, the firm observance of the Rule, and above all "vigilance." They were encouraged to adopt a spirit of sacrifice and to invoke the help of Our Lady, especially when struggling with temptations. They were cautioned about the books they should read, and in the 20th century this was extended to warnings against going to the cinema, and the use of radio and television. Before the mid-20th century, psychological counselling and insights from anthropology, psychology, medicine, and human development were not available to help men who found it difficult to live a life of chastity. According to Ferrarini, "The generalised culture was one of repression. So many people carried this difficulty personally, secretly, and with an incomplete methodology" (2021, p. 14).

One of the most important means that were promoted to help the brothers was the practice of spiritual accompaniment which involved *compte de conscience*, or manifestation of conscience. When the Rule of 1837 was published it was followed immediately with an explanation of a method for personal prayer and then an instruction on the *compte de conscience,* which shows the importance of this requirement. The *compte de conscience* is recommended as a means for improving self-knowledge, and to receive advice, encouragement, or "salutary reprimands" from the superiors, and as a means to find the source of difficulties. The brothers were instructed to share good and bad experiences, desires and temptations, whether they observed the Rule in all its details, were faithful to spiritual exercises, if they followed *The School Guide* (1853) regarding classroom practice, and if they were too familiar or too severe with the children. In the Constitutions of 1852, the brothers were told to conceal

nothing from the superiors. They were expected to reveal themselves honestly to benefit from this means of support.

The brothers were introduced to the practice of *compte de conscience* when they entered the Institute as postulants who met with the novice master once every eight days. The professed brothers met with a superior for the *compte de conscience* once every four months. This practice came to an abrupt end as a result of the promulgation of *Quemadmodum* by Pope Leo XIII on 17 December 1890. This Vatican document stipulated that only priests could hear the manifestation of conscience. According to Brother Avit, the implementation of this decree led to a decrease in perseverance (*Annales de L'Institut,* III, Rome, 1993, p. 391). Br Théophane, Superior General at the time, said that there were no abuses in the Marist Institute, and that the suppression of this practice in communities of sisters and lay institutes of brothers was due to abuses elsewhere. Undoubtedly, the end of this practice meant that the brothers lost an opportunity to share about aspects of their lives that they found difficult.

Brother François and Brother Louis Marie, who led the Institute between 1839–1879 were strict regarding moral failings, and followed the example of the founder by excluding those found guilty of abuse. Fr Colin, Superior General of the Marist Fathers (1836–1854), felt the leaders were too severe, and that the brothers with sexual problems needed more compassion and better training (Ferrarini, 2021, p. 10). Brother Louis Marie, Superior General from 1860–1879, also had to contend with changes in France as a result of the relaxation of press censorship in 1860, which led to more reporting of abuse by priests and brothers. Brothers were punished in the same way as lay teachers and could be sentenced to up to 20 years hard labour.

The rise of anti-clerical governments in France after 1878 led to an intensification of attacks against the Church and members of religious orders (Ferrarini, 2021, p. 28). Br Louis Marie was terrified of a serious

offence being committed in a Marist school as this would be used by the Church's enemies to have brothers dismissed from schools. Verhoeven (2023) writes that each case that was reported or brought to court provided a propaganda boost for the anti-clerical parties. Harsh penalties were given to those found guilty and there was a rise in prosecutions from an average of 325 in 1855 to 487 some 20 years later. He writes, "To a degree that historians have not appreciated, the school wars were fuelled by sexual scandal" (2023, p. 859).[22] The Marist Brothers were not immune from such scandals and Brothers Louis Marie and Théophane, the leaders of the Institute during this period, had good reasons to be concerned about the behaviour of some brothers, the state of the brothers' spiritual lives and their fidelity to the Rule.

The Superiors often wrote about moral formation, which was their way to address affectivity and sexuality. There was little change in the teaching until the mid-20th century when psychology and the theological renewal that contributed to and was the result of Vatican II began to make a difference. The Common Rules of 1960 presented chastity in an idealistic way, exhorting the brothers to aspire to perfection, and counselling them against temptations. Interestingly, it also stated that dismissal was a possibility:

> Hence, no member of the Congregation, whoever he may be, shall ever be suffered to swerve from the above rules and, saving the canonical requirements stated in the Constitutions, whoever has offended openly and seriously against this holy virtue shall be dismissed from the Congregation. (Common Rule, #79)

Brother Charles-Raphaël, Superior General from 1958–1967, wrote that "in the area of chastity, aspirants have the right and the need to receive a frank, clear, and sufficient explanation" (Circular 8 December 1963, Vol.

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[22] Verhoeven noted that "there is not a single instance of a cleric or bishop reporting an abusive priest to the police" (2023, p. 863). There were, however, many cases of priests being moved to other parishes or helped to flee.

XXIII, p. 73). He also noted that, as a result, candidates should no longer be taken at a young age. This indicated the beginning of a change in attitude to formation for chastity, but, as we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, his wise words did not have an impact on the formation that was offered to the five participants who experienced Marist formation in the 1950s and 1960s.

There are few examples of dismissal for the sexual abuse of children in the years after the Second World War, despite what was written in the Common Rules. The Common Rules also contained a chapter (38) on "Relations with the Pupils", some sections of which read like the prototype of a Safeguarding policy document. For example:

> 431   The brothers are absolutely forbidden to strike their pupils. . . .
> 437   The brothers must not take pupils as companions when they are travelling, or out walking or visiting.
> 443   Supervision should be more exact and careful in the dormitories and during the walks. For this purpose, there will be two brothers for each of the boys' dormitories.

The Marist Institute rapidly spread to other countries of the world. In the 1950s there were approximately 9,000 brothers in the Institute, which was present in all five continents. The Institute provided a monastic style of formation for men who then went on to live in apostolic communities, living busy, dedicated lives as teachers in schools (Lanfrey, 2016, p. 362). Five of the participants in this research project experienced Marist formation in the years before the General Chapter of 1967–1968, which responded to the call for renewal and updating in the light of the Documents of Vatican Council II (1962–1965), especially *Perfectae Caritatis*, on the up-to-date renewal of religious life (28 October 1965).

2.4   Vatican II and the Development of the Theology of Brotherhood

Marcellin Champagnat passed on a particular way of being brothers, based on a strong family spirit, to the congregation that he founded. Recent research suggests that the lack of clarity about identity and poor spiritual formation of Marist brothers can partly account for the beginnings of defections in the 1950s that became a flood after Vatican II. Lanfrey (2016, Vol. *II*, p. 377) wrote that the "crisis of withdrawals . . . had begun before the Council and therefore it does not explain everything." Between 1957 and 1966, 60% of brothers in temporary profession left the Institute as well as 40% of brothers in Perpetual profession. The number of Marist brothers peaked at 9,721 in 1964. By 1981 there were 6,549 brothers, representing a loss of 32% of the membership (Lanfrey, 2016, Vol. *II*, pp. 373–378). Lanfrey noted that there was a growing reluctance to recruit adolescents to juniorates, and many of those who entered juniorates did not continue in religious life.

Lanfrey described the period between 1967–1985 as a time of crisis, with the Marist Institute struggling to redefine its identity. Lanfrey quotes reports of Superiors General who referred to the lack of spiritual depth in the lives of many brothers, a consequence of the poor spiritual formation that was offered in formation houses, as reported by the participants in this study (Chapter 5).

One of the consequences of the renewal of religious life after Vatican II was an impetus to rethink the vocation of a religious brother. This led to theological developments in the understanding of the vocation of the religious brother in the Church and to a change in the way that brotherhood was presented in the official documents of the Marist Brothers. Three of the participants, Bernard, Christopher, and Howard, were involved in Marist formation in the 1970–80s, when this process of

reappraisal and rearticulation of what it meant to be a Marist brother were underway. They spoke positively about their experience in formation.

2.4.1 Widening the Space of our Tent[23]

According to Lanfrey, the General Chapter of 1967–1968, and the documents that it produced, led to a change in the way that the identity of the Marist Brothers was understood:

> So the idea of an educational community was born. This would flow over into the introduction of the laity into the vision of the Institute. The Institute then would no longer define itself as a society of religious involved in education with well-defined boundaries but as a community made up of a core of brothers living a particular spirituality together. (2015, p. 405)

As indicated above, the number of professed brothers was in steep decline, and, at the same time, there was an awareness of the role and vocation of lay people in the Church. In order to maintain their educational commitments, the Marist Brothers needed to recruit and rely more on lay people in their ministries, gradually appointing lay people to positions of leadership and responsibility.

Three laymen who were Presidents of Federations of Former Marist Students met with some General Chapter Delegates in 1976. The General Chapter, in a message to the World Union of Marist Former Students, said:

> The idea of the GREAT MARIST FAMILY, conceived as a community of all persons united by a common ideal, having the

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[23] This line, taken from Isaiah 54:2, was used by Br Michael Green as the heading for a section of *the History of the Marist Brothers*, Vol. *3* (Rome, 2017, pp. 413–422), regarding the movement towards greater partnership and inclusion of lay people in the life and mission of the Marist Institute. The heading for the following section is entitled "A bulging tent" (pp. 422–428), and the third section is entitled "Imagining a new tent" (pp. 428–432).

same attitude of mind and acting in a similar manner according to the spirit of Blessed M. Champagnat, seems to us as not only interesting and attractive, but highly desirable. (Marist Brothers of the Schools, 1976, p. 108)

This opening to lay people, and not only former students, who were mostly male and professionally successful, represented a formal acknowledgment of the idea of an educational community, which Lanfrey referred to in the quotation above. It should also be noted that this community of persons was not only involved in the educational work of the Brothers, but was also interested in benefiting from and developing the spiritual patrimony and life of the Marist Brothers. Brother Charles Howard, Superior General 1985–1983, wrote a Circular on "The Champagnat Movement of The Marist Family." He opened his circular as follows:

> Dear friends,
> You may be rather surprised to see this Circular addressed to "friends" rather than "brothers."

Br Charles identified the interest of lay people who wanted to share the Marist charism as members of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family[24] as a sign of hope for the Marist Brothers. He continued:

> I believe it is most important, in speaking of this Movement, to emphasize that what it represents is not some organisational manoeuvre to counterbalance the decreasing number of brothers, but rather the response to a call, and a very clear one—a call not just to lay people, but to us Marist Brothers. (1991, p. 343)

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[24] The formulation "Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family" was coined partly as the phrase "Marist Family" was already being used to describe the four branches of Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters, Marist Brothers and Marist Missionary Sisters. The use of this new formulation avoided confusion of the two groups and protected any sensitivities around the use of the phrase by other Marist groups.

It is fair to argue that the emergence of and support for the extension of Marist vocation, mission, and life to lay people would probably not have happened without the decrease in the number of brothers that occurred in the mid-late 20th century. This movement was built on the developments in the theology of laity that emerged at Vatican II. However, it was taken up with varied levels of enthusiasm in different parts of the Institute and a range of groups, structures and levels of commitments emerged as expressions of this development. At the 1993 General Chapter, a group of lay men and women were invited for part of the Chapter as participants. Brother Emili Turú, who was a delegate at that Chapter and who became Superior General in 2009, described the moment when the lay people entered the Chapter Hall (2016, 6 June, p. 235):

> In 1993, Br Charles Howard took a very bold and prophetic decision to invite, for the first time, a group of lay men and women to the General Chapter. I can still recall the emotion I felt the moment the doors of the Chapter Hall were solemnly opened, and the group of lay men and women was welcomed in, to a standing ovation, by the assembled Chapter. Those open doors are symbolic, in my opinion, of the opening of a new chapter in our Marist history.

2.4.2 Fraternity and Brotherhood in the Church

The theology of brotherhood found itself in an intellectual cul-de-sac in the years before Vatican II. Making use of an outdated and hardly relevant monastic and pietistic spirituality, it provided little spiritual support for men who lived busy lives as teachers and administrators. The Vatican Council, especially in *Gaudium et Spes,* provided an openness to the world that was a better fit for men who were engaged in the world and preparing children to live, work, and form relationships in society. The often physical—and certainly metaphorical—monastic walls were ready to be taken down, but a new theology and spirituality which would provide a

new meaning structure and theological rationale for the lives that brothers were leading took time to emerge.

2.4.3 *Gaudium et Spes*

Gaudium et Spes (G & S), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7 December 1965), opens with a statement of the solidarity of the Church with all people:

> The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men [sic] of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. (Flannery, 1975, p. 905)

Two sentences later the word "community" is introduced, and the first paragraph of the Preface ends with a statement of solidarity: "That is why Christians cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history." This identification of the Church (Christians) with humanity and its concerns represented the culmination of the renewal process that took place at the Vatican Council. According to O'Malley, SJ, (2008, pp. 53–54), Pope John XXIII moved the Church away from the defensive stance towards the world and modernity that had characterised the Vatican since the French Revolution (1789). All people of good will were invited to be partners in working for the betterment of humanity. This can be seen in paragraph 3 of *Gaudium et Spes*, where the Council invites "the whole human family" to "enter into dialogue" with the Church regarding the problems facing humanity. The Council expresses a desire to "foster a sense of brotherhood" (G & S, 3). These themes are explored in greater depth in Chapter II entitled "The Community of Mankind." The Council Fathers wrote about the "communitarian nature of man's vocation," and said that the Father "desired that all men should form one family and deal with each other in a spirit of brotherhood" (G & S, 24). The Council Fathers returned to the Gospels, reminding their readers that Jesus "clearly

outlined an obligation on the part of the sons of God to treat each other as brothers" (G & S, 32). This section ends with a reminder that Jesus established a "new brotherly communion" after his death and resurrection, and with an exhortation to increase solidarity until it is brought to fulfilment as the family "beloved of God and of Christ their brother" (G & S, 32).

Gaudium et Spes highlighted the centrality of brotherhood and solidarity in the Church's internal relationships and in its mission to the world. Fear and a suspicion of the modern world, which had been a characteristic of the Church since the French Revolution (O'Malley, 2008), had been replaced by an invitation to dialogue and partnership. Where previous councils had condemned various propositions ("let them be anathema"), the Vatican Council, making use of a different genre of writing (O'Malley, 2008, p. 47), invited Catholics, Christians of other denominations, and all people of good will to work with the Church to solve problems together.

The Council, and its attitude of openness and dialogue, with respect for the dignity of all persons, restored the importance of brotherhood in the teaching of the Church. This found a favourable echo in the renewal Chapter of the Marist Brothers in 1967–1968. In subsequent years the Marist Brothers adjusted to this changed and renewed understanding of brotherhood that they developed in succeeding General Chapters and in other published documents, culminating in *Wherever you go: The Marist Brothers' Rule of Life* (2020).

2.4.4 Developments in the Understanding of the Identity and Mission of Brothers in the Church

The renewal instigated by Vatican II and the decision of orders of brothers and religious sisters to pursue further education, particularly in theology, along with the challenge of making sense of the vocation of brothers in the late 20th century, led to writing and reflection on the identity and mission

of brothers in the Church. This can be seen, for example, in books such as *Who are my Brothers*? (1988) edited by Philip Armstrong, CFC, and *Blessed Ambiguity* (1993), edited by Michael F. Meister, FSC. It can also be seen in a small booklet entitled *"Brother* [sic] *in Lay Religious Institutes"* (1991). Brother Charles Howard, who was Superior General of the Marist Brothers from 1985–1993, took the initiative to invite the Superiors General of 12 religious orders of brothers to write a text that would provide greater understanding of the vocation and identity of brothers in the Church. The document opens with an acknowledgement that "the brother's vocation is not always well understood, even by those closest to us" (1991, p. 5).

In their introduction, the 12 Superiors General wrote:

> We find our true identity in being brothers—not through the priesthood, but rather through our presence and our mission in the world, through our relationships based exclusively on brotherhood. Our dealings with everyone, characterised as they are by simplicity and freedom, bring out the dignity of each person and the communion that exists among all members of the Church. Our life thus bears witness to what religious life is. (1991, p. 6)

This statement highlights a number of significant themes. It situates the identity of the brother in his relationships. The reference to communion is an echo of Jesus' practice, discussed above, of table commensality, where all are welcome and invited, and treated with dignity. There is a change from situating identity in a specific role or profession. Rather it highlights "presence"—the fact of being present as a brother, witnessing to the values of the Kingdom of God, and doing so in a spirit of simplicity and freedom. This is a radically different vision and understanding of brotherhood than the way that the vocation as brother was presented in the 19th and 20th centuries, until the renewal mandated by Vatican II.

This process of trying to articulate the role and identity of being a brother, which was taking place in other religious orders of brothers at the same time, culminated in the writing and publication by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church* (2015), the first Vatican Document that focused on Religious Brothers. *Wherever you go: the Rule of Life of the Marist Brothers (2020)*, made use of the 2015 Vatican document and applied the thinking about brotherhood that it contains to the Marist Brothers, and seeks to articulate the Marist vision of brotherhood for today. These documents will be discussed in Chapter 9 as they can offer a way forward for the vocation and identity of religious brothers in the Church.

2.5   Summary and Conclusion

This chapter focuses on brotherhood in general and, in the context of the Marist Institute, offers a perspective for the research. The participants in this study had been members of the Marist Order since around 18 years of age, and had received formation in the history, values, and spirituality of the Marist Brothers. The Chapter began with a reflection on the importance of brotherhood in the life and teachings of Jesus, and the radical nature of the Gospel call to equality and brotherhood. This was followed by a short discussion of the establishment of monastic communities in the third and fourth centuries. The struggles of some monks with the life of celibacy were highlighted, and the vulnerability of boys and adolescent males was noted.

The foundation and growth of the De La Salle teaching Brothers in the 18th century became the model for the foundation of many other orders of brothers in the 19th century, including the Marist Brothers. Care of children, and what we would now call safeguarding, was central to Marcellin Champagnat's motivation when he founded the Marist Brothers. This was followed by a discussion of the teaching of Superiors General of

the Marist Brothers regarding relationships with students, the means provided and recommended to live a life of chastity and the response of the Institute to those who caused scandal as a result of the sexual abuse of children. In the 19th century brothers who were found guilty of abuse were dismissed, but this practice appeared to have changed in the 20th century.

The Second Vatican Council had a significant impact on religious life in the Catholic Church. It instigated and influenced a necessary and timely exploration and restatement of the identity and mission of brothers in the Church. The significant reduction in the number of brothers in the Church led to the publication of the first ever Vatican document on religious brothers in 2015.

Brotherhood offers a way to reflect on the findings from the perspective of membership of the Marist Brothers, the educational and religious space where the abuse took place, and the organisational system that influenced the development of the participants and informed their educational and religious values. In Chapter 3, we will examine what is known about the prevalence of child sexual abuse by priests and brothers. The limited data on brothers as a separate group will be looked at carefully to see if the prevalence of abuse by religious brothers is different in any way from priests and deacons in the Church. The findings on the experience of Marist brotherhood will be explored in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3

DEMOGRAPHIC AND STATISTICAL DATA REGARDING SEXUAL ABUSE BY CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

The data from Australia, New Zealand, and Scotland reveal a significant amount of abuse in schools and institutions run by religious institutes of brothers. In Australia, for example, 40% of all abuse claims made to Catholic authorities were against members of congregations of religious brothers (Australian Royal Commission (ARC), 2017, p. 11), who accounted for 32% of all known alleged abusers (ARC, June 2017, p. 15). This leads to an important question regarding prevalence of abuse: are members of religious orders of brothers more or less likely than priests to be guilty of the abuse of children? If so, how, if at all, can this be accounted for? In this chapter I propose to explore the following points:

- The available data on the abuse of children by priests and religious brothers;
- Data about the gender of victims;
- Data about the age of victims;
- The significance of diagnoses of sexual disorders in understanding child sexual abuse by clergy;
- Clergy as atypical sex offenders.

3.1 Sources of Prevalence Data on Child Abuse by Priests and Brothers

Data from commissions of inquiry on abuse of children by members of the clergy are presented on Table 3-1. It is important to note that the researchers did not always include or provide separate data on brothers when they compiled their data.

Table 3-1

Reports which Provide Data on Priests, Deacons, and Brothers who Abused Children.

•	Australia	Priests and brothers.
•	Ryan Report, Ireland	Priests and brothers, but no prevalence data
•	Germany	Priests and deacons, but not brothers
•	United States	Priests and deacons, but not brothers
•	France	Priests and brothers.
•	Netherlands	Priests and brothers, but no analysis of national data.[25]
•	Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry	Priests and brothers, but no prevalence[26] data.
•	New Zealand	Distinguishes between diocesan clergy and religious, but does not report data on brothers separately.[27]

The Australian Royal Commission is the only Commission of Inquiry that presents separate prevalence data on diocesan clergy and religious orders, and on priests and brothers (including members of clerical institutes where there are ordained and non-ordained members). The Scottish data can be useful, if read carefully. The lack of specific data on brothers makes it more difficult—but not impossible—to reach an informed, but tentative, conclusion regarding prevalence by brothers as opposed to priests and deacons in the Catholic Church.

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[25] "The Commission of Inquiry did not carry out exhaustive research into each separate section of the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands. Its inquiry was restricted to 12 extensive studies, five more limited studies and five limited studies. These covered seven dioceses, the order of Franciscans and Jesuits, and 13 congregations." (Deetman, 2011, p. 367).

[26] The Scottish Child Abuse reports do not provide percentages of the number of members of religious orders or diocesan clergy who abused.

[27] Information Gathering Project (IGP) Fact Sheet. See: https://tautoko.catholic.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/20220201-Tautoko-IGP-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf. Accessed 8 March 2022.

3.1.1 Prevalence Data on Clerical Child Sexual Abuse

It is difficult to obtain reliable data on the prevalence of child sexual abuse in society. Definitions of sexual abuse can vary, and the data collected in different studies are not always directly comparable. The U.K. Office for National Statistics, for example, referencing the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) notes that less than 25% of adult victims had contacted the police about their abuse. As a result, prevalence rates based on information provided to the police are not a reliable source of data for the population.[28]

It is also difficult to obtain reliable data on priests and brothers who abused children. There is often a significant time lag between the experience of abuse and reporting. The John Jay Report (2006) presented a table that showed that 39.4% of the total allegations known to the investigators were received in the decade 1990–1999, and that 44% were received between 2000 and 2002 (2006, pp. 8, 13–14). The 2011 John Jay Report provides data that 3,399 reports of abuse were received in 2002 (p. 9) after the revelations of abuse in the Boston archdiocese. The combination of media publicity, access to records, and change in the culture such that victims had more confidence that they would be heard, given time and attention, and believed, led to a dramatic increase in the number of reports of abuse that were received by Church and civil authorities.

The time lag in reporting of incidents of abuse raises an added difficulty as older victims may have died or have been less inclined to come forward. The further that abuse occurred in the past corresponds to a decreased likelihood that it will be remembered and/or reported. Some victims may have been abused by more than one abuser, and there were abusers who

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[28] Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: year ending 2019. See: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/childsexualabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019#what-do-we-know-about-the-prevalence-of-sexual-abuse-during-childhood, Accessed 20 December 2021.

had more than one victim. Some victims were abused on one occasion, and others were abused over a longer period of time. Some of these difficulties were noted by the authors of the German research project into abuse by Catholic priests in Germany between 1946 and 2014 (Dreßing et al., 2019, p. 391), where it was noted that whatever data are available have to be considered as the lower estimates regarding prevalence of abuse. These issues make it difficult to be completely confident about data regarding prevalence of abuse by priests, deacons, and brothers.

The John Jay Report (2004)[29] was the first comprehensive analysis of the sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy. The data from the report suggest that there was a rise in reported cases of sexual abuse occurring in the 1950s that peaked around the 1970s, and then gradually declined towards the end of the 20th century (See Figure 3-2.)

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[29] The American Catholic Bishops commissioned the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York to undertake research into the sexual abuse of children by clergy in the United States between 1950 and 2002. This report was published in 2004. A second report on *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950–2010*, was published in 2011. Karen Terry was the principal investigator.

Figure 3-2

John Jay (2006): Incidents of Sexual Abuse by Year of Occurrence, 1950–2002.
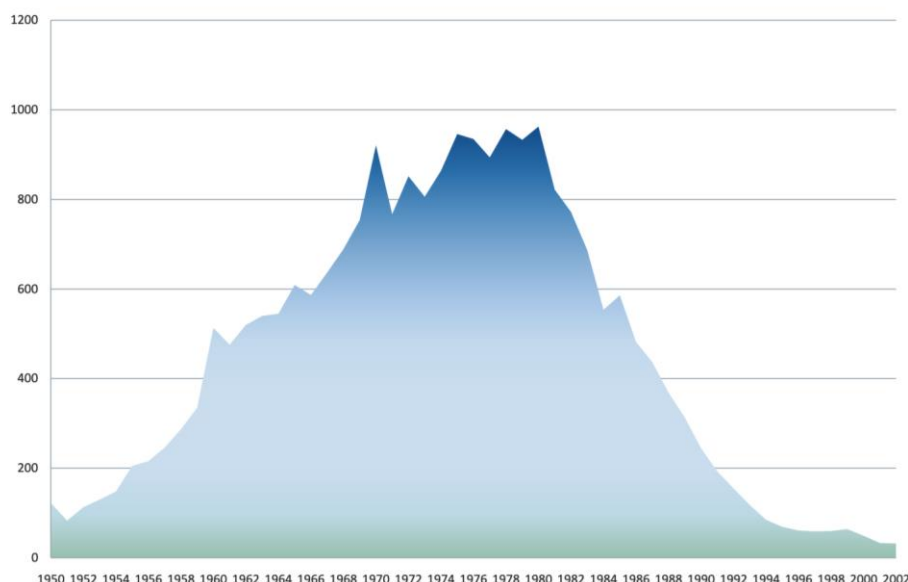
In the Causes and Context Report of 2011, the authors referred to the Supplementary Report that was published in 2006 and noted that:

> The temporal distribution of incidents of sexual abuse, as measured by the dates the acts of abuse took place, is stable and an accurate representation of the rate of change in the behaviour of priests. (John Jay, 2011, p. 32)

The investigators made use of a Gaussian distribution (normal distribution) in drawing this conclusion. It is not unreasonable to question the appropriacy of using a normal distribution in attempting to establish data about abuse, given the potential number of unreported cases from the past. The authors of the study explained their methodology. They made use of sophisticated statistical methods to explain their results (see footnote).[30] It

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[30] "The *Supplementary Report* on the *Nature and Scope* data, published in 2006, concluded that the temporal distribution of incidents of sexual abuse, as measured by the dates the acts of abuse took place, is stable and an accurate representation of the rate of change in the behaviour of priests. The research team predicted that while additional incidents of abuse would be reported to the dioceses, the peak years of incidence and the rate of

is unlikely that the John Jay College would risk its professional reputation by offering a model of data that could not be supported and which was not based on tested and respected statistical methods and models. Notwithstanding the statistical modelling of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2011) and the observed decline in reports of allegations of abuse since 1980, it cannot be presumed that absence of reported allegations (1950–1975) is equivalent to absence of abuse, and that a time lag in reporting is likely to account for some of the reported decline in abuse by priests and brothers since 1980.

The German researchers noted a similar phenomenon in their research (Dreßing et al., 2019, p. 390):

> During the analysis period (1946–2014), the number of accused clergy peaked in the 1960s to 1980s, but new first accusations were noted up to the end of the analysis period in 2014.

This pattern can be observed in the United States (Figure 3-2), Scotland (Torsney, 2018) and other countries. Cahill and Wilkinson (2017, pp. 186–187), after reviewing all the relevant data, concluded that "there has been a substantial decline in clerical child sexual abuse by Catholic priests and religious since the 1980s." They wrote that this decline was also apparent in Australia and offered 10 reasons that may have contributed to this decline.

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increase or decrease would not change. This provisional conclusion was the result of statistical analyses that employed three methods of estimation applied to the annual count of reports of abuse made to the Catholic Church. Two versions of a lagged time series were carried out using two different sets of assumptions about relevant variables thought to influence the reporting of sexual abuse. Neither procedure was able to replicate the observed data structure. A mathematical procedure using the expectation maximisation algorithm was done to estimate unknown cases and confirm the time series findings. This procedure used a sub-set of data of events based on what is known or reported prior to each year in the data set and then modelled the distribution of unknown events most likely to produce those results by using a Gaussian distribution based on the annual incidence data. The predicted distribution peaked in the late 1970s and was stable by the early 1990s, providing further confirmation that the pre-2003 observed pattern is an accurate representation of the pattern of unreported cases (p. 32)." *The causes and context of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests in the United States, 1950 – 2010.* (2011), p, 32.

- The high and sustained public visibility given to the issue by the media since the early 1980s, which has had a severe mitigating impact upon the presbyterate and religious Institutes;

- The better child protection mechanisms now in place, including through state legislation requiring mandatory reporting, together with various Church initiatives, especially in Catholic schools;

- The greater vigilance of Catholic parents and Catholic Church employees generally, as a result of the publicity;

- The declining number of active priests over the past four decades and the associated aging of the remaining cohort;

- The resignation of many priests and brothers from clerical life to enter marriage or same-sex relationships;[31]

- The almost total collapse of the former altar server system;[32]

- The very substantial decline in the number of Catholics who regularly make use of the sacrament of confession, thereby reducing the risk of solicitation;

- The closure of many, if not most, Catholic boarding schools, farms (sic) schools, orphanages, and other Catholic residential institutions, particularly in the developed world;

- The lessened interaction of Catholic priests with students in Catholic schools, as schools have become more professionalised and managed by lay persons;

- The reform of the selection and screening processes for seminaries and houses of formation, especially in developed

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[31] The original text described the priests and brothers who left as "high-risk." Dr Des Cahill said that this was not a considered description and could be removed. (Private conversation, 10 September 2024).

[32] The original text described altar boys as a "high-risk" group. Cahill and Wilkinson provide many examples of altar boys who were victims of abuse. They conclude in a section about altar servers (p. 46): "Because there were many more boys abused (four boys to one girl), the risk factor for boys, especially altar boys, was very considerable for those attending Catholic primary schools and the boys' secondary colleges." They also note the observation in the John Jay study (2011) that after the introduction of female altar servers in the United States that "the offending rates against both altar boys and altar girls were approximately equal" (Terry & Freilich 2012).

countries, and the inclusion of human formation elements in seminary curricula.

Cahill and Wilkinson do not mention that there was a corresponding decline in reported incidents of child abuse in society generally. Finkelhor and Jones (2004, p. 1) noted that "the number of sexual abuse cases substantiated by child protective service agencies (CPS) dropped a remarkable 40 per cent between 1992 and 2000." After examining possible explanations for this decline in reporting, they concluded that there was a real decline in cases of sexual abuse. Commenting on this apparent decline, Pinker (2011) noted the change in the culture in the USA and England to promote the welfare of children, and that the well-being of adolescents showed marked improvement on a range of indicators.[33] He is in agreement with Finkelhor and Jones that it is likely that other factors are involved that have not yet been noted or understood. The same may be true of the decline in reported allegations of sexual abuse against Catholic priests and brothers. The authors of the John Jay study noted that "the decline in the Catholic Church is greater than in the wider society for the same period" (John Jay, 2011, p. 13).

3.1.2 Data on Clergy who Abused Children

Table 3-2 provides the reported percentages of clergy who abused in different countries. Bearing in mind the inherent difficulties of presenting reliable data on allegations and numbers of perpetrators of abuse, the authors of the reports that have been examined offered the following statistics regarding percentages of clerics who abused in the following dioceses and countries:

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[33] Pinker (2011) mentions that in comparison with previous years children and adolescents were "less likely to run away, to get pregnant, to get into trouble with the law, and to kill themselves" (p. 440).

Table 3-2

Percentages of Clergy who Abused Children from National and Diocesan Reports.

Country/Diocese	% of clergy who abused.
• New Zealand	14% (Te Rōpū Tautoko Fact Sheet).[34]
• New Zealand: Only male religious	8% (Te Rōpū Tautoko Fact Sheet).[35]
• Australia	7% (Australian Royal Commission, 2017).[36]
• Dublin Archdiocese, Ireland	6.14% (Cahill & Wilkinson, 2017, p. 81).
• Germany	4.5% (Dreßing et al., 2019, p. 389).
• United States: Diocesan priests	4.27% (John Jay, 2011, p. 8).
• United States: Religious priests	2.7% (John Jay, 2011, p. 8).
• France	3% (Sauvé, 2021, p. 226).
• Netherlands	2% (Sauvé, 2021, p. 226, footnote #137).[37]

The New Zealand figure (14%), from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions, is almost double the next highest figure of eight per cent. This leads us to ask if this is an outlier and if so, why. It may be due to the increased publicity during the past 20 years, leading to an increased number of victims coming forward. It could also be that the smaller sample (1,781 allegations of abuse according to the commission's definition) and a total of 369 alleged abusers out of a total of 3,560 clergy

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[34] Information Gathering Project (IGP) Fact Sheet. See|: https://tautoko.catholic.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/20220201-Tautoko-IGP-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf. Accessed 8 March 2022.

[35] Information Gathering Project (IGP) Fact Sheet. See: https://tautoko.catholic.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/20220201-Tautoko-IGP-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf. Accessed 8 March 2022.

[36] Royal Commission into abuse into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. (2017). *Proportion of priests and non-ordained religious subject to a claim of child sexual abuse 1950–2010,* p. 6. See: http://www.theinquiry.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Australian-Royal-Com-Proportion-of-priests-and-non-ordained-religious-subject-to-a-claim-of-child-sexual-abuse-1950-to-2010.pdf.

[37] Dreßing et al. (2019) do not offer a percentage for Dutch clergy in their article (Table 6). The Sauvé Report offers a statistic of two per cent without providing a source for this data.

and religious who were present in Aotearoa and New Zealand since 1950, led to a higher reported incidence. In a small sample, an above average number of cases, especially if some have a higher number of victims, can have a distorting effect on the aggregated data. As in the United States, there was a higher percentage of diocesan clergy than members of religious orders who were abusers. It is also possible that the New Zealand data is more accurate, and that in other countries and dioceses, as suggested by Dreßing et al. (2019), there were more unreported cases of abuse by clergy and members of religious orders, leading to an underreporting of the data.

3.2   Prevalence of Abuse by Religious Brothers

Most of the available data provides information about abuse by priests and deacons (John Jay) but excludes religious brothers. It is also not always clear if religious brothers have been included in the totals (Dreßing[38]). The French and New Zealand reports include information about religious priests and brothers, but the data from the two groups are not separated in the presentation of the data. The Australian Royal Commission provided a breakdown of figures according to religious institutes as well as dioceses.

3.2.1 Australian Data

Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia, announced her intention to recommend the establishment of a Royal Commission to investigate the abuse of children in institutional settings on 12 November 2012.[39] Gillard made her announcement as the result of growing pressure for a national investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse in Australia. Previous commissions of inquiry in individual states (Western Australia, 1996,

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[38] Dreßing et al. (2019) indicate that their total of 753 offenders includes 479 priests, 122 with religious orders, and 11 monks. In their Methodology section they do not mention having accessed records of orders of brothers. The do not clarify if there was a separate category for religious brothers, whether or not they were included, or if they have been added to the number of monks.

[39] See: https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/child-abuse.

Queensland, 1999, Victoria, 2012) concluded that there was widespread abuse in the Catholic Church and other religious bodies, a pattern of cover-up, coercion of victims not to report, silencing of victims, and failure to co-operate with the police and statutory authorities. In July 2012, John Pirona, who was the victim of Fr John Denham, took his own life. Prime Minister Gillard attended Pirona's funeral in the town of Newcastle and many mourners at his funeral indicated their support for the "Shine the light" campaign of the *Newcastle Herald* for a royal commission of inquiry. The growing pressure for a national inquiry and the increasing revelations in the media of abuse by members of religious and other organisations, led to Gillard's decision to recommend the establishment of a royal commission. The public hearings of the Australian Royal Commission began in April 2013.[40]

The Royal Commission published data on the proportion of priests and religious brothers who were subject to a claim of child sexual abuse in the period 1950–2010 (ARC, 2017, p. 6.). This data is shown in Table 3-3, with orders of brothers highlighted in bold.

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[40] See: https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies.

Table 3-3

Percentages of Members of Male Religious Institutes who Abused Children.

Religious institute (weighted average)[41]	Per cent
St John of God Brothers	**40.4%**
Christian Brothers	**22.0%**
Salesians of Don Bosco	21.9%
Marist Brothers	**20.4%**
De La Salle Brothers	**13.8%**
Patrician Brothers	**12.4%**
Society of Jesus	4.8%
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart	3.3%

Note: Orders of brothers are highlighted in bold.

The St John of God Brothers recorded the highest percentage of abusers; but there was a relatively small number of St John of God brothers, and those who abused had many victims, possibly resulting in a distorting effect in the overall statistics. (The same is true of the St John of God Brothers in New Zealand. Some brothers abused in both Australia and New Zealand). The Salesians, an order of priests with a smaller number of non-ordained members, whose primary apostolate involves running schools and other educational institutions, recorded an almost equal percentage of men who were accused of sexual abuse with the Christian Brothers and the Marist Brothers. The next two highest percentages in the table also belong to orders of brothers. It is worth bearing in mind that the figure for diocesan priests was 7.9% and the aggregated average for all priests who were members of religious orders was 5.7% (ARC, 2017, p. 6). The Jesuits, whose apostolate involves schools, parishes, retreat centres, third-level education and other ministries, had a lower percentage than the orders that were wholly involved in schools. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who ran four schools in Australia, similarly had a lower

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[41] The weighted average was arrived at by establishing the number of years that a member of an order worked in Australia, as some members of the religious orders worked abroad during the time period. The investigators established a way of working out which proportion of their time was spent in Australia by adjusting the number of abusers accordingly. See Royal Commission into Abuse into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. (2017). *Analysis of claims of child sexual abuse made with respect to Catholic Church institutions in Australia*, p. 5, # 15.

average of 3.3%. Their members worked in parishes, as missionaries
abroad, and in other apostolates. The St John of God Brothers are involved
in nursing care and ran residential homes for children with disabilities
(who are known to be more vulnerable to abuse). As already noted, the
Christian Brothers, Marist Brothers, and Salesians had roughly similar
percentages of members against whom there were credible allegations of
abuse in the time period. It is also important to note that these percentages
are significantly higher than the percentages from national surveys of
priests (Dublin, Germany, United States, France, the Netherlands) or of
religious orders of priests whose primary apostolate was not in education
(Jesuits, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Jesuits).

The Australian Royal Commission is the only commission of investigation
(to date) that has provided an analysis and percentage of claims against
ordained and non-ordained members of the same religious institute (Table
3-4).

Table 3-4[42]
*Comparative Data on Non-Ordained Members of Religious Institutes in
Australia who Abused Children. (Percentages).*

Order	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
Christian Brs	12.1	9.8	10.2	6.6	1.1
De La Salle Brs	3.4	8.7	6.7	6.7	4.4
Marist Brothers	9.4	11.2	9.2	6.9	3.5
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart	0.0	1.9	1.7	0.4	0.0
Patrician Brs	5.1	5.3	6.5	4.6	0.0
Salesians	8.3	9.6	13.1	5.9	0.0
Society of Jesus	0.2	2.0	5.8	1.9	0.0
St John of God	40.3	15.9	19.8	18.0	0.0

The St John of God Brothers had the highest percentage of claims in each
decade until the 1990s. The teaching orders (Christian Brothers, De La

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[42] Royal Commission into abuse into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
(2017), *Analysis of claims of child sexual abuse made with respect to Catholic Church
institutions in Australia*, p. 50.

Salle Brothers, Marist Brothers, Patrician Brothers, and Salesians of Don Bosco) had percentages ranging from 5.1 to 12.1 in the 1950s, rising to 5.8 to 13.1 in the 1970s. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Society of Jesus worked in a range of apostolates. As we can see, the percentages for the Jesuit Brothers and Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) Brothers are significantly **lower** than for brothers in religious orders that were comprised solely of brothers. This certainly suggests (but not conclusively) that priests and brothers who had opportunity (Salesians, Marists, Christian brothers, De La Salle brothers, Jesuit priests and Sacred Heart Missionaries who were teachers) abused at a higher rate than brothers in clerical institutes who may not have been exposed to the same opportunities for abuse.

Jesuit and MSC brothers often had support roles in communities and institutions and were not often directly involved in work with children. The figures show that the brothers in these two religious orders had significantly lower percentages of claims made against them than brothers who were members of religious orders that worked directly with children in schools and residential institutions during the 50-year period under review.

3.2.2 Scottish Data

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) published three case studies about abuse by members of three Catholic male religious orders: the Christian Brothers (February 2021), the Benedictines (August 2021), and the Marist Brothers (November 2021). The Christian Brothers ran St Ninian's Residential Care Home in Falkland, Fife, from 1953–1983. The Benedictines ran a secondary school at Fort Augustus Abbey from the early 1920s until 1991, and Carlekamp Preparatory School in North Berwick from 1931–1977. The Marist Brothers ran St Joseph's College in Dumfries from 1875 until 1982, when it was transferred to the local authority as a day school, and St Columba's College in Largs, a

preparatory school (1921–1982). There is no data available on the number of brothers or monks who were members of staff at each of these establishments in the years when the brothers and monks were present; but the reports provide data on the number of students who were accommodated and the number of allegations of abuse, as well as civil and criminal cases (Table 3-5).

Table 3-5

*SCAI Data Regarding Complaints, Civil Actions, and Prosecutions
Relating to the Residential Schools run by the Christian Brothers,
Benedictines, and the Marist Brothers in Scotland, 1951–1982.*

	Christian Brothers (p. 86). St Ninians's school, established 1947	Benedictines (p. 142)	Marist Brothers (p. 119)
Dates	1951–1983	1951–1991	1951–1983
Secondary School	Nearly **900** children	Between 1922–1991, approximately **4,825** children.	Between 1922–1991, approximately **14,000** children.
Preparatory School (Primary)		Between 1922–1991, approximately **2,000** children.	Between 1951–1982 **1,000** children.
Number of complaints 1998–2019	13	17	28
Number of civil actions raised against the order as of March 2019	27	2	2
Number of complaints to the police and police investigations, as of March 2019	4	26	26
Number of prosecutions relating to abuse	2	1	2
Number of SCAI applicants	29	33	35

As can be seen in Table 3-5, the number of students accommodated varied
in the different establishments, making comparisons difficult. However,
each order received between 13–28 complaints between 1998–2019, and
the SCAI received between 29–35 applicants who wanted to be witnesses

at the inquiry or to provide witness statements. Each order had one or two convictions at the time of publication of the case studies. It is easier to compare the Marists and Benedictines, as they both ran one secondary school and one preparatory (primary) school. Both religious orders had a history of abuse in their establishments.

Table 3-6
Marist and Benedictine Schools and Number of Named Abusers.

School	Number of named abusers
Benedictines	
Carlekamp Preparatory	5 priests
Fort Augustus Secondary	5 priests (four also perpetrated abuse at Carlekamp) and one layman
Marist	
St Columba's College Preparatory	Two "serial" abusers
St. Joseph's College (10–18 years of age)	Five brothers who sexually abused and one who physically abused.

Comparisons are not easy, given the lack of prevalence data in the Scottish reports; but it appears that there is some similarity in the levels of abuse in both religious orders, by Benedictine priests (monks) and by Marist brothers.

St. Ninian's, which was run by the Christian Brothers, was a residential care home where boys were sent from other residential care homes or as a result of decisions taken at Children's Hearings. Many came from backgrounds of deprivation or abuse, or had come to the attention of the police. It is possible to compare the data on abuse at St Ninian's with data on abuse from schools run by the Rosminians (The Institute of Charity) in Ireland. The Rosminians is a religious order where most of the members are priests. They also had a history of abuse by members of the order (Fahey Bates, 2003), and Chapters 1–3 of Volume 2 of the Ryan Report (2009) were devoted to industrial schools run by the Rosminians, where the following observation was made:

21. 1.26 Sexual abuse was a recurring problem for the managers of
Upton and Ferryhouse and for their Provincial. (*CICA Investigation
Committee Report Vol. II*)

The industrial schools in Ireland bear comparison to St Ninian's in Fife
(National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in
Ireland, 25 June 2017, Review of Child Safeguarding in the Rosminians),
as children were sent there for a range of reasons that related to their
family backgrounds, deprivation, or need for residential care.

3.2.3 Conclusion to Section on Prevalence Data About Religious Brothers

The data is far from conclusive, but it appears from the Australian data and
a careful reading of the Scottish data, that opportunity emerges as a key
factor in abuse by priests and brothers. We await further data that separates
the different groups of diocesan priests, religious priests, religious brothers
in nonclerical orders, and brothers in clerical orders before we can arrive at
anything close to a definitive conclusion. In Australia there were higher
percentages of abuse by religious orders of men (priests and brothers) who
worked in schools and residential institutions. There were significantly
fewer claims made against brothers who were members of religious orders
with some schools and a range of other apostolates. The reports on the
Christian Brothers, Benedictines (monks, some of whom were ordained),
and Marists in Scotland, and the Rosminians in Ireland (mostly ordained),
reveal a similar pattern of failings in the system and allegations of abuse,
and comparable levels of abuse. The importance of situation and
opportunity in understanding abuse by members of religious orders in the
Catholic Church, whether clerical or lay religious, emerges as a key
variable.[43] This was also highlighted in the Report of the Spanish

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[43] G.T. Faulkner provides short descriptions of six Christian brothers who abused boys. One
of the six ("B") was not a teacher but worked in an orphanage where he had opportunities
to abuse boys (1998, p. 56).

Ombudsman in October 2023: "The significance of opportunity and institutional factors was brought to the attention of the Advisory Commission through studies carried out in Spain and other countries" (Spanish Ombudsman, p. 50).

3.3   Age and Gender of Victims

It was noted above that 78% of claims against priests and brothers in Australia were made by men (ARC, Case Study 50, #27). Many reports have noted the difference in numbers of male and female victims. The percentage of male victims from five reports is shown on Table 3-7:

Table 3-7
Percentage of Male Victims in Different Countries and Studies.

Report/study/country	% Male victims
John Jay, USA (2011, p. 9)	81%
Sauvé, France (Colet, 5 October 2021)	80%
Australia	78%
Dreßing et al., Germany (2019, p. 389)	62.8%
Spain (Spanish Ombudsman, 2023, p. 52))	84.19%

The Ryan Report (2009, Conclusions #18) noted that sexual abuse was "endemic" in boys' institutions and the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report (2018) simply states that "most of the victims were boys" (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of the Attorney General, 2018, Report 1 of the Investigating Grand Jury, p. 1). The majority, but not all, of victims of sexual abuse by Marist brothers in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, and The Netherlands were male. This leads us to ask why so many victims of priests and brothers were male.

The John Jay Report (*Causes and Consequences*, 2011) provides data about the gender and age of victims (Figure 3-3).

Figure 3-3

Nature and Scope Data (USA). Victims Grouped by Age and Gender.
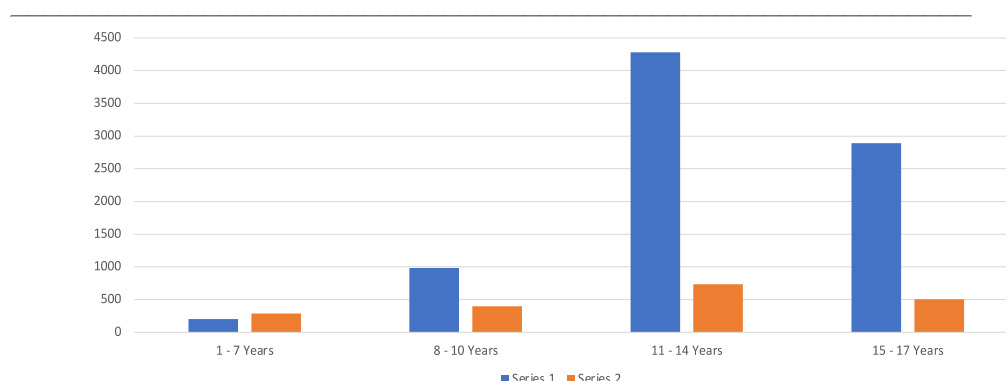
Note: Males are on the left (Series 1), females are on the right (Series 2).

The German data regarding the age of victims can be seen on Table 3-8.

Table 3-8

Age of Affected Persons at the Time of First Sexual Abuse (German Data).

Age	Number of affected persons	Proportion of all affected persons (N = 3,677)	Proportion of persons with record of age
≤ 13 years	1,899	51.6%	66.7%
≥ 14 years	948	25.8%	33.3%
Unknown	830	22.6%	Not stated
Total	3,677	100 %	100 %

Dreßing et al. (2019) report that two-thirds of the victims in Germany were under 13 years of age at time of first abuse. The mean age was 12, with a standard deviation of 3.1, indicating that 68% of the victims experienced their first abuse between 9–15 years of age (Grimm, 1993, p. 82). This is comparable with the American data where 40% of victims were males aged between 11–14. The data from France (Sauvé) show that 52.2% of the victims were aged between 11–13 years of age at the time of first abuse, and that more than three-quarters were male (Sauvé, 2021, p. 535). (Assuming the age distribution of the data from the various sources

regarding the age of male victims was roughly normal, then the results will be roughly similar).

3.3.1 Age and Gender Summary

The majority of victims of sexual abuse by priests and brothers were male and were aged between 11–14 years of age, which is within the age range that forms part of the diagnosis of paedophilia (see below), though it is not evident that all perpetrators who abused children in this age range were paedophiles.

We will now consider the issue of sexual disorders and deviant sexual preferences which are often considered to be implicated in the abuse of children by priests and brothers.

3.4   Sexual Deviance

It has been hypothesized that those who abuse children may be affected by sexual desires that deviate from the norm, and in that sense can be considered "deviant." The word "deviant" can mean that the behaviour is statistically rare, or it can suggest maladaptive, unhealthy, bizarre, or problematic sexual desires, with connotations of disapproval and possibly disgust. In a review of the literature, and based on his own clinical experience, Marshall (1997, p. 168) wrote, "Clearly, many child molesters . . . do not have deviant sexual preferences." This has been supported by subsequent research.

It is, however, often assumed that men (including clergy) who abuse children are influenced by deviant sexual desires. There are two areas where a predisposition could lead to a vulnerability to abuse children: the psychiatric diagnosis of paedophilia, and the presence of a paraphilic disorder(s) in the personality of the offender.

3.4.1 Paedophilia

The phrase "paedophile priests" is often used in connection with the child abuse crisis in the Catholic Church, but how appropriate is this label?[44] How prevalent is paedophilia among the population of priests and brothers who abuse? According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Version V (DSM V, 2013), the diagnostic criteria for paedophilia are as follows:

> 5.2 Paedophilic disorder
> - Over a period of at least six months, recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger).[45]
> - The individual has acted on these sexual urges, or the sexual urges of fantasies cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulty.
> - The individual is at least age 16 years and at least five years older than the child or children in criterion A.

Note: This does not include an individual in late adolescence involved in an ongoing sexual relationship with a 12- or 13-year-old. (APA, 2013, pp. 697–698).

There is ongoing discussion about the adequacy of the official criteria for paedophilia.[46] However, there is consensus that some people (mostly men) have a preferential erotic attraction to children who are prepubescent, and who can be called paedophiles. The John Jay Report (2011) analysed data from 4,392 priests who had been accused of the sexual abuse of a child under 18 years of age.

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[44] Cf *"Lutter contre La Pédophilie,"* (Bayard/*cerf*/Fleurus-Mame, 2010)" the statement by the French bishops on child sexual abuse by clergy.

[45] Marshall (1997, p. 156) used a 14-year-old cut-off point.

[46] Marshall (1997, p. 153), after reviewing his clinical files, could find no evidence of *recurrent* urges or fantasies in over 60% of non-familial child offenders.

The researchers concluded that less than five per cent of the cohort of abusing priests could be classed as paedophiles. Tellingly, whereas the proportion of priests with a paedophilic disorder remained stable over the timeframe of the study, allegations of abuse increased significantly through the 1960s and 1970s then declined from the mid-1980s (John Jay, 2011, p. 5). This suggests that it is necessary to identify factors other than the presence of priests and brothers who could be diagnosed with paedophilia (and who acted on their desires) to explain the increase in incidents of abuse of children from 1950 until 1980, with the subsequent decline between 1980 and 2000 (approx.).

In its discussion of individual factors that contributed to the sexual abuse of children by clergy, the authors of the Australian report divide perpetrators into two groups:

- Fixed, persistent perpetrators;
- Opportunistic, situational perpetrators.

They describe the fixed, persistent perpetrators as men who have a long-standing sexual attraction to children, have multiple victims over many years, and that their attraction to children often begins when they are adolescent. They refer to their "paedophilic interest," and state that very few clergy offenders conform to the description of fixated, persistent offenders. They say that the majority of offenders "exploit situations where they have access to and authority over children to sexually abuse them," and often abuse as a result of stress in their lives (ARC, 16, pp. 592–593).

The German researchers interviewed 50 priests who had abused children. They created four "types" of offenders who abused on "patterns of experience and behaviour" (Kruse et al., 2020, p. 104). The first type they identified comprised 14 persons "for whom paedophilic tendencies could

be assumed." The average age of their victims was 10.6 years and the clerics found these boys sexually attractive. The abuse extended over longer periods and the perpetrators usually had many victims. The 14 clerics who were put in this category represent 28% of the group, which is significantly higher than the five-per-cent upper limit identified in the John Jay study. In this study, two of the participants were identified as paedophiles (25%). Four out of 12 participants in Winship's (2012) study of priests and brothers from Australia who abused children identified as paedophiles (33%).

The authors of the CIASE (France) report were able to analyse 14 Church files of clerical abusers. They concluded that three of the clerics in this small sample could have been diagnosed with a paedophilic disorder (21.4%), partly as they described paedophilic fantasies, and partly as two of the clerics abused boys and girls, not just boys. In two cases there were also criminal records for the same offences (CIASE, 2020, p. 149). The available data on priests and brothers for whom the words paedophile and paedophilic have been used to describe their abusive behaviour are presented on Table 3-9.

Table 3-9
Percentages of Priests and Brothers for whom the Words Paedophile or Paedophilic have been used to Describe their Abusive Behaviour.

Report	Date	Total in study	Total paedophilic behaviour	%
John Jay	2011	4,392		≤5%
Winship	2012	12	4	33%
German (HMG)	2019	50	14	28%
CIASE (France)	2020	14	3	21.4%
Geary	2024	8	2–3	25–37.5%

It should also be borne in mind that given the larger number of victims, extending over a longer period of time, there is the possibility of a higher likelihood that clerics who were paedophiles would come to the attention

of religious and statutory authorities, leading to an overrepresentation in prevalence statistics.

It is possible to conclude from the analysis in these reports and research projects that:

- The blanket term "paedophile priest' is a misnomer and misleading.
- There are some priests and brothers whose behaviour, and what we know of their desires, corresponds to the DSM V criteria for paedophilia. The research that exists concludes that between 5%–33% of priests and brothers who have abused can be given this diagnosis.[47]
- The abuse of prepubescent children by other clergy (the majority) has to be accounted for by reference to other factors.

3.4.2 Ephebophilia

Jenkins (1998, p. 101) noted that the word hebephilia (later ephebophilia) was first used in 1955 to differentiate between adults who were sexually interested in adolescents rather than children. "Ephebophilia" is not a diagnostic term, but is a descriptive term used to identify those who abuse children under 18 years of age who are not given the diagnosis of paedophilia. Lothstein (1990) used the paedophile/ephebophile distinction in his discussion of sexual abuse by priests and brothers. He described an

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[47] The Executive Summary of the John Jay (2011) Report concludes that "less than five per cent of the priests with allegations of abuse exhibited behaviour consistent with a diagnosis of paedophilia" (p.5). The phrase "behaviour consistent with" is ambiguous, as the key difference between those who can be diagnosed as paedophiles and clergy who are not paedophiles but who abused children in the paedophile range (prepubescent) is found in their preferential erotic desire ("recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges") towards prepubescent children. Later in the John Jay Report we read: "An analysis of data on accused priests and victims of sexual abuse from the *Nature and Scope* study revealed that, if paedophilic behaviour was defined as the exclusive presence of two or more victims under the age of 11, then 96 priests, or 3.8 per cent of those who were reported to have had two or more victims, could be classified as paedophiles' (p. 54). This, again, is not helpful, as it relies on a numerical counting of victims in the lower end of the paedophile age range, rather than an analysis of erotic attraction.

ephebophile as "an adult who has recurrent, intense sexual urges and sexually arousing fantasies but whose object is a pubescent child or adolescent," which relies heavily on the DSM criteria for paedophilia, which, as we have seen, can be problematic. He added, "The age of the child is arbitrarily set at 14 through 17 years" (1990, p. 21).

There has, however, been considerable confusion regarding the use of this term.[48] Bering (2009) attempted to clear up the confusion by suggesting that a hebephile is attracted to 11–14-year-olds, and ephebophiles are mostly attracted to 15–16-year-olds. Beech and Mitchell (2017, p. 188) describe a hebephile as a person attracted to pubescent children.

Given, as noted above in the section on age of victims, that most victims of priests and brothers are in the paedophile age range (11–14 years of age, depending on the report being referenced) and bearing in mind the definitional inexactitude regarding the term "ephebophilia," it is difficult to see how it serves any useful purpose in the discussion of clerical sexual offending. The Ferns Report (2005) came to the same conclusion, noting that "the Inquiry has been informed that the distinction between paedophiles and ephebophiles is not useful, nor is the sexual orientation of the priests concerned particularly relevant" (Murphy, Ferns Report, 2005, p. 18).

What can be concluded concerning the utility of the terms paedophile and hebophile/ephebophile as designations variously applied to types of (clergy) sexual abuse of children? Firstly, although most victims of clergy abuse are prepubescent children, research suggests that a paedophile diagnosis (a preferential erotic attraction to prepubescent children) applies to no more than a minority of clergy child sex offenders. Factors other than paedophilia must be involved in this type of abuse. Secondly, the terms hebophile and ephebophile–referring to erotic interest in pubescent and post-pubescent children/youths–are not applied with any consistency, carry

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[48] See John Jay Report (2010) footnote 165 for a discussion of the different and sometimes contradictory definitions of ephebophilia.

no clinical value, and consequently have largely fallen out of use in discussions of (clergy) abuse. The utility and explanatory power of the terms paedophile, hebophile, and ephebophile in relation to (clergy) abuse are further undermined by the fact that some men are attracted to and abuse children across age ranges and stages of physical development.

3.4.3 Data from the Participants on Attraction to Younger Children

During the interviews with the participants in this research study, most of whom were not given the diagnosis of paedophilia, that took place in late September and October 2022 (Chapter 4), it was possible to explore the motivation to abuse boys in the 10–14 range. The methodology employed involved semi-structured interviews. With this issue, however, there was no alternative but to propose the explanations to the participants that had been arrived at by other authors. This ran the risk of suggesting a theory to which the participants might give assent, and which could be done to please the researcher or because it sounded plausible. These caveats have to be borne in mind when reading the responses of the participants.

As explained in Chapter 1, each of the participants was given a pseudonym in alphabetical order: Andrew, Bernard, Christopher, Dennis, Edward, Frank, Grant, and Howard.

Andrew and Frank had both been given the diagnosis of paedophilia. When the psychological description of paedophilia was explained to Frank, he said, "Well that's true for me." (Frank, 4, p. 8, 41)

Bernard was asked if younger boys were more vulnerable because they were less of a threat, and if older students, who probably had a clearer sense of their sexual identity and who were physically stronger and more confident, may have presented a higher risk of rejection. There was also the fear that they were more likely to report such behaviour. Younger

children on the other hand were more likely to respond positively to signs of affection. Bernard replied:

> I'd say that's fairly accurate. . . . I would agree there'd be . . . a belief that the younger ones wouldn't see anything that needed to be reported, or that they wouldn't want to report it. (Bernard, 4, p. 17; p. 18, 4–6)

Bernard also spoke about his fear of rejection. He spoke about an incident when he touched a boy's back when he was coming out of the showers, and the boy said, "Don't touch me." Bernard explained:

> I just froze . . . thinking, "Are people gonna think I'm gay?" I was very sensitive if there were students who didn't want to be physically close. (Bernard, 2, 447–451)

Bernard agreed with the theory that perpetrators lacked confidence with adults and that it was easier to relate to a child or a young adolescent than to an adult. He said, "My self-esteem was so low, but I was confident with children" (Bernard 4, p. 19, 4–5). He also reported an occasion when a student rebuffed his attempt to make contact:

> There was one student in a boarding school . . . and he was lying in bed and I was rubbing his stomach and he said "Oh, don't do that, brother." . . . I never wanted to be in a situation where there was a chance of rejection. (Bernard, 4, p. 20, 1–3, 17–18)

Christopher, who was 19 years of age when the contact abuse occurred, said that it was the result of a combination of loneliness, poor self-esteem, need for affection, a way of dealing with stress, and sexual experimentation. He added that the abuse stopped when the boy decided to stop coming to his room:

I'm only aware of that later, say, like, 12 months/18 months later that there was resistance there. . . . I'd asked if he'd like to meet and the answer would be "no." (Christopher 1, 1016-1021)

Dennis felt a sense of connection with the boys whom he abused, and the abuse extended over a number of years. He agreed with the suggestion that at the time of the abuse he was "emotionally congruent" with his victims:

There was obviously something in me that identified with them at that age. . . . I enjoyed this as an adolescent and I think they will enjoy it. (Dennis, 4, p. 7, 42, 49–50, p. 9, 14–16)

Edward suggested that the key difference with the boys who were his victims was the "emotional closeness" (Edward 5, p.17, 13–14) and he agreed that he felt that this gave him a "special connection." Having a "special connection" is not the same as emotional congruence, but it does suggest an inappropriate crossing of boundaries regarding the role of a teacher/brother with a young person.

Howard was asked if, due to his own lack of appropriate adolescent development, there was some kind of "unconscious connection" going on in his choice of a 15-year-old. Howard replied:

Yeah. . . . I think that's true, yes. (Howard, 4, p. 17, 25)

Howard also spoke about his belief that his victim would not report:

I think for me . . . the unconscious, the sleeping took all of that away. Still . . . the same sort of thinking . . . in a way that they're not going to react. They're not going to report. (Howard, 4, p. 14, 31–33)

Reflecting on the responses of the participants, it would seem that emotional congruence or connection with children was a feature of their

abuse, as well as a fear of rejection, or being exposed as gay, which would have been more of a fear with older students. Frank said, "I didn't receive rejections at my physical abusing, maybe possibly because I chose students who I judged may not reject" (Frank, 3, p. 6, 17–18). The younger students appear to have responded positively to an approach involving affection or which involved intimate sexual contact, which offers support to the theories outlined above about the choice of younger boys for men who did not have a preferential erotic attraction to children but who abused boys between 10–14 years of age who are the object of attraction for men who are given the diagnosis of paedophilia.

3.4.4 Paraphilic Disorders

The authors of the John Jay study write that the question of the possible presence of sexual disorders is a key question with regard to clerical offenders (2011, p. 52). As well as paedophilia, clerical offenders may be influenced by other sexual (paraphilic)[49] disorders. There was, for example, a reported incident of a priest who was sexually aroused by rubbing a boy's lower legs.[50] The authors of the John Jay study (2011, p. 54) refer to a study by Smallbone and Wortley (2004), which found that out of 362 sex offenders, fewer than 12% could be diagnosed with a paraphilic disorder apart from paedophilia.

Frank shared that he was attracted to stroking the pubic hair of the boys whom he abused that, he said, "had a pleasurable effect" (Frank 3, p. 6, 46–52). It was not his intention to touch the penis, though it was difficult to avoid this due to the fact that these parts of the boys' anatomy were close together. This would be considered as an example of fetishistic behaviour. Such fetishistic or paraphilic interest was not found in the interviews with the other participants.

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[49] The term "paraphilia" was first used in 1954 to describe sexually deviant behaviours and interests. (John Jay, 2011, p. 53).

[50] Buckley, Pat. (2014). Thinking Catholicism. Hearing from one of Fr Paul Symonds' Victims. http://wisecatholic.blogspot.com/2014/03/hearing-from-one-of-father-paul-symonds.html. Accessed 18 June 2022.

The authors of the John Jay study "hypothesized that priest-abusers would be similar to non-clergy abusers" and that there would therefore be few members of the clergy who could be diagnosed with paraphilic disorders (John Jay, 2011, p. 54). In the absence of data, it is not possible to reach any conclusions about the presence of paraphilic disorders except to say that the small number of recorded cases may suggest that, based on current knowledge, the presence of paraphilic disorders and/or fetishistic interests may not be a significant factor in the abuse of children by clerics.

3.4.5 Voyeurism

The DSM V (2013, p. 686) defines voyeurism as follows:

- Over a period of at least six months (as a general guideline), the individual receives persistent and intense sexual arousal from deliberately observing an unsuspecting person who is naked, in the process of undressing, or engaging in sexual activity.
- The individual has acted on these sexual impulses with a nonconsenting person, or the urges and/or fantasies cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- The individual is at least 18 years of age.

There are reports of voyeuristic behaviour in relation to clerical perpetrators of abuse in the Scottish and Australian Inquiry reports.[51] However, it is not clear if this behaviour led to "persistent and intense sexual arousal" or if it is simply that benefiting from being present during changing and showering arrangements provided an opportunistic situation to see boys who were naked. Hanson and Harris (1997) add an important caveat when they write:

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[51] Also, see Jones et al. (2024), p. 71. There is also anecdotal data about priests, brothers, or other teachers who appeared to take advantage of changing arrangements to look at boys when they were naked in showers and changing rooms.

> In itself, sexual interest in viewing naked women or men should not be considered deviant, as it is an important component of normal sexual response.

They note that viewing unsuspecting people when they are naked is a clear breach of social ethics. When it involves children, it is child abuse.[52]

Christopher, in this study, first made eye contact with his victim when the boy was taking a shower and he saw that the boy had an erection. Edward insisted that boys remove their underpants when receiving massage, even though it was not necessary for the treatment. Frank said that he noted which boys he found attractive when they were taking showers and agreed that seeing the boys naked in the showers was rewarding for him (Frank, 3, p. 7, 26–29). Howard reflected that he was given no preparation for a job that required seeing young men naked in the showers and in changing areas on a daily basis.

While such opportunism might not constitute voyeurism as defined as a paraphilic disorder in the DSM V, it unquestionably was part of the abuse of boys that took place in religious schools and institutions. Lady Smith noted the presence of this behaviour in the Marist schools in Scotland (2021, p. 30):

> I find that pupils . . . were sexually abused by Marist brothers. The abuse included . . . voyeuristic practices including the enforced nakedness of children.

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[52] Karen Liebrich (2004, p. 52), recounts a story of Fr Melchiorre, an Italian Piarist priest in the 16th century, who insisted that some of the young brothers carry out certain tasks naked, which was contrary to the Order's rules regarding modesty. Schultenover (1993, p. 209–216), recounts the struggles with sexuality of Fr Luis Martín SJ (1892–1906). According to an autobiography which Martín wrote, among other things, when he was Superior of the Diocesan Seminary in Salamanca, he used binoculars to spy on the boys in the seminary at night.

Schools and institutions, as well as holiday camps and residential experiences, provided opportunities where men who had a sexual interest in children, or who felt frustrated and needy in the sexual and emotional parts of their lives, could view boys when they were naked. Voyeurism has also been reported as taking place in the context of spiritual abuse.[53] By viewing naked adolescents and men, some clerics, especially those in charge of boys or young men as part of their ministry, could indulge their desires and interests, using their supervisory or pastoral duties as a cover for voyeuristic activities, or, as in the case of some of the participants, intentionally as part of their selection and abuse of boys.

3.4.6 Conclusion to Section on Sexual Deviance

While sexual behaviour with a child is considered socially deviant, Marshall (1997, p. 168), as mentioned above, concluded that most men who abuse children do not show evidence of a stable deviant interest in children. There is a difference between engaging in a behaviour that is considered deviant and the presence of a stable sexual interest that is considered as deviant, for example, paedophilia. While the majority of victims of priests, deacons, and brothers were boys in the paedophile age range (9–14 years of age), a minority of offenders could be diagnosed as paedophiles (John Jay, 2010 p. 3). The word ephebophile is often used to describe those who abuse children but who are not paedophiles. However, as shown in this chapter, the lack of definitional clarity around the term renders it of little use in discussing clerical offenders.

We can perhaps best account for the choice of younger children as victims by reference to emotional congruence, increased opportunity, avoidance of risk, and fear of rejection or exposure. There are some—a minority— clerical offenders who could be diagnosed with a paraphilic disorder or

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[53] Bishop Michel Santier, before becoming a bishop, asked young men to remove their clothes as part of confession when he was the head of the Ecole de Foi in eastern France 1996–2001). See https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/french-bishop-retired-last-year-without-revealing-sex-abuse-sanctions/16751. Accessed 20 December 2023.

fetishistic interest. Voyeuristic practices were part of the abuse by some priests and brothers; but the behaviour appears more opportunistic than paraphilic in origin, reflecting an interest in seeing people naked, which fuels the adult pornography industry. The presence of a paraphilic disorder can help to account for the aetiology of sexual abuse for a small number of offenders; but the explanation for most of these offences lies elsewhere.

3.5   Clerical Offenders: An Atypical Group

The Final Report on Religious Institutions of the Australian Royal Commission (2017), making use of the research of Dr Marie Keenan (2012, pp. 67–69), identifies salient features of clerical abusers:

> They are older, better educated, less antisocial, and have little history of other kinds of criminal activity. They are more likely to have sexually abused adolescent boys and more likely than other perpetrators of child sexual abuse to report an adult homosexual orientation. They tend to have fewer victims than other perpetrators of child sexual abuse and have higher rates of endocrine disorders than other perpetrators of a similar age or in the general population. They are more sexually under-informed and immature than other perpetrators.

Many of these points are reflected in the participants in this study: the victims were almost all male (one participant digitally adjusted images of boys *and* girls), three (or four) of the perpetrators were adult homosexual men, most of the participants began their abuse at an older age than non-clerical offenders, and they were all well-educated and had no other records of criminal activity. They all reported a lack of sex education and spoke about their lack of psychosexual maturity and awareness. One had more than 60 victims, and the others ranged from 1–20 victims (See Chapter 4).

A comparison between general offenders (criminals) and non-clerical sex offenders that is taken from Smallbone and Cales' (2015, Table 3) table of 10 developmental dimensions can be found in Appendix 7. Information about clerical offenders has been added in the fourth column. The table makes use of statistical data from the John Jay study, which was published in 2004, and other studies and reports of commissions of inquiry. It is important to note that some of the sources of this data are dated, and it presents a generalised picture that obscures important distinctions and omits information that does not fit the generalised picture. Also, this data relates to the developed world and cannot be applied to the developing world and non-industrialised societies. That being said, the data shared in Appendix 7 is useful for comparisons with non-clerical sex offenders and in highlighting aspects of the profile of clerical offenders that identify them as an atypical group.

While clerics who abuse children are considered to be atypical offenders (Keenan, 2012, p. 68), they are not a homogeneous group (Tallon & Terry, 2008, p. 627). Piquero et al. (2008) suggest that there are some similarities between clerical offenders and "white collar" criminals, as they tend to be better educated, with higher IQs and higher social status than other criminals (ARC, 2017, p. 593). They also begin abusing at a later age. Perhaps the key similarity is the "violation of delegated or implied trust" (Piquero et al., 2008, p. 586). Clerics enjoy prestige in their communities and are often "revered." According to the John Jay study, the offenders with one victim were more likely than others to have offended against a girl (33.6%) whereas the highest number of male victims were abused by clerics with 10 or more victims (3.7% of the sample). Those with most victims also tended to have younger victims, had an earlier onset of their offending behaviour, and they abused for longer (Mercado et al., 2008).

3.6 Conclusion and Summary

Opportunity emerges as a salient feature in the analysis of prevalence data on abuse. The data suggest that being a brother or a priest is less significant as a factor than opportunity to abuse based on ministry or location.

- The majority of the victims were boys aged between 9–14 years of age;
- The behaviour and sexual desires of a small percentage of perpetrators conformed to the DSM V definition of paedophilia;
- The motivation for abusing boys in the younger age group appears to be related to opportunity, the innocence of younger boys which made gaining their trust easier, fear of rejection or reporting by older boys, and emotional congruence with the younger age group.

Clerical offenders present as an atypical group. They tend to be older, better educated, with little evidence of antisociality or other criminal behaviour. More appear to be adult homosexual men than abusers in the general population, though not all clerical abusers are homosexual. Lack of sexual knowledge and sexual underdevelopment are features of this group. While they tend to have fewer victims than other perpetrators of sexual abuse, there are some clerical abusers who can have many victims.

In the next chapter, I will present the methodology used in this study, before presenting the findings from the 30 hours of interview data with the eight participants.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) has been chosen as the principal method for this study. This is also a study within the discipline of Practical Theology, which builds on the phenomenological methodology to understand better the relationship between individual behaviours and pathologies, theologies, spiritual traditions, and institutional culture, thereby contributing to our understanding of the relationship between the organisational culture, the theology that underpinned it, and the sexual abuse of children.

In this chapter I will discuss the following points:

1. The choice of qualitative research for this study, including the choice of interpretive phenomenological analysis;
2. Insider research, including a discussion of reflexivity and subjectivity, and the place of values in the research process;
3. Reliability and validity;
4. A description of the participants;
5. The interview as the source of data, including the issue of deception;
6. Practical theology.

4.1   Qualitative Research

The positivist tradition in scientific research requires concrete evidence as a basis for knowledge. Knowledge could be gained by careful observation and measurement, the manipulation of independent variables, and by eliminating contamination through bias, subjective opinions or values, and the influence of a particular context (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 29). This tradition has led to the development of methodologies like the two-group,

pretest-posttest design (Bernard, 2000, pp. 112–113). Social science researchers such as Wilhem Dilthey (1833–1911), Georg Simmel (1858–1918), Hans Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), and Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) questioned the validity of the positivist approach and the assumptions upon which it rested (Frederickson, 2018, and Christians, 2018).

Qualitative researchers stress the context in which the realities that are being studied exist, rather than attempting to analyse these realities in "universal terms," as though the particular context did not matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 1). They work from their particular "worldview," and different researchers can operate from different worldviews (Erikson, 2018, p. 54). While this can be seen as a weakness of qualitative research, it also highlights the different basis of these two approaches. Since social science researchers work with human beings, they are aware that real life situations are relative, situated in specific but varied contexts, and that life is layered, nuanced, ambiguous, and sometimes paradoxical (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 10). There are multiple realities and multiple perspectives. This "reality" should be reflected in research methodologies and results should be reported tentatively.

Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 26) present the different methodological approaches on a continuum with extreme relativism on the left-hand side and extreme positivism (realism) on the right-hand side (Figure 4). They suggest that the middle position, which they describe as "critical realism," accepts that knowledge is socially influenced, but is also prepared to accept the claim that there is such a thing as an "authentic" reality that provides a shared foundation for knowledge. I accept the critical realist position as an acceptable and pragmatic hypothesis for this research.

Figure 4-4
The Ontology Continuum.
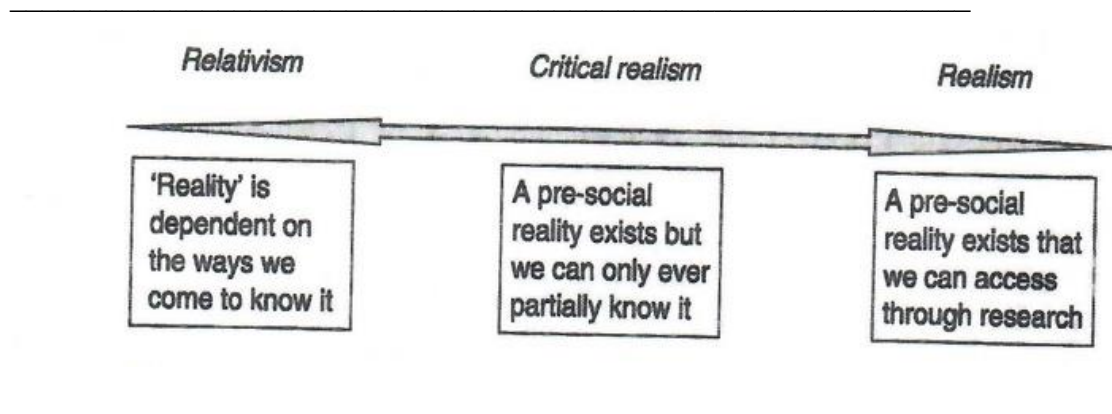
Qualitative research has been criticised for being "unscientific" and lacking clarity (Braun & Clark, p. 9), that it often does not produce a single, robust answer, and that there is a danger of the researcher only seeing what he/she wants to see (Erickson, 2018, p. 49). It has also been criticised for being subjective, which positivist researchers wanted to avoid.

Qualitative research has specific strengths that are relevant and appropriate for this study. In the first place, the process of data collection more closely resembles real life, which enables the researcher to access the ways people make meaning of their lives. The use of inductive theory—from the ground up—leads to theory-generating research. Qualitative research does not look to the natural sciences as a model of research, and this includes the hypothesised ideal of the objective unbiased researcher. The issue of the subjectivity of the researcher will be discussed later in this chapter. Qualitative research views the subjectivity of the researcher as an asset and not a weakness, as it is intrinsic to the research process (Braun & Clarke, p.6).

Empirical and qualitative approaches have their place in research. The key question relates to the appropriate methodology for a particular research project. The quantitative data—drawn from secondary sources and not from research undertaken as part of this project—that were presented and

discussed in Chapter 3 have influenced significant aspects of this project, especially questions related to the age and gender of victims, the role of paraphilic disorders, and the ways in which Marist brothers were similar to or different from sex offenders who were not clerics.

4.1.1 Phenomenological Research

Qualitative researchers make use of words as data. Words provide a window into the interior lives of participants. Qualitative researchers value "thick description," which Geertz described as "the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). The participants articulate their experiences and understandings as comprehensively as possible and the researcher then attempts to analyse the data to elicit the meanings contained in what has been shared (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp. 3, 19). Qualitative research requires a methodological shift from the objectivity of numerical data, statistical research methods with their assumptions and criteria, to an approach that favours personal inquiry, flexibility, responsivity to interviewees, awareness of the researcher's own subjectivity, and a capacity for reflexivity.

Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 53) write about the importance of prioritising the world view of the participants as part of the researcher's attempt to make sense of their experience. This is done by processes such as coding, clustering, organising, and interpreting. I have adhered to the words used by the participants, identifying themes and points of convergence and divergence in order to search for understanding. In the interviews, I attempted to help the participants to explore their experience in terms of their own lives and Marist history, and the contexts in which they found themselves, in order to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon of abuse by this particular group of Australian Marist brothers.

4.1.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

According to Smith (1996), the aim of IPA is "to explore the participant's view of the world and to adopt, as far as is possible, an insider's perspective of the phenomenon under study." IPA is situated firmly in the discipline of phenomenological research, as the researcher endeavours to explore people's lived experience, without removing them from their own context, inviting them to provide a narrative of an experience while sharing the way they understand that experience (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 180). Brocki and Wearden (2006, p. 88) emphasise the importance of the narrative aspect of IPA, which remains paramount. It is not possible to gain access to a person's world directly, and IPA makes use of interviews and other sources of data. The researcher then makes sense of what they have heard and read through a process of reflection and interpretation.

Smith wrote that IPA is particularly suited to research projects that involve examining major experiences in people's lives that engage "hot cognition" (Smith, 2019, p. 162). The sexual abuse of children by members of a Roman Catholic religious order is an emotionally laden topic that will have required considerable reflection and cognitive activity on the part of the participants (Smith, 2019, p. 162). This approach to phenomenological research elaborates the philosophical foundations of phenomenological research found in the writings of Husserl (1859–1938) and Heidegger (1889–1976).[54] Qualitative research offers a range of methodologies; but

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[54] Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) was a German philosopher who sought to ground psychology in human consciousness, which he proposed was the only objective route to knowledge "untainted by subjectivity" (Lowes & Prowse, (2001), p. 38, quoted in McConnell – Henry (2009), p. 10). Husserl proposed a process of "bracketing" previous judgements and knowledge. Husserl believed that the process of bracketing provided credibility to the statements being made (McConnell-Henry et al, 2009, p. 9). Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was a proponent of what has been termed the "hermeneutic turn." Heidegger was, like Husserl, a phenomenologist; but, unlike Husserl, he did not believe that it was possible to reduce perception of phenomena to its essence, making use only of description of "the thing in itself." He believed that there is no such thing as experience unmediated by context, prejudgements, assumptions, and personal life narratives. For Heidegger, the human person is a meaning-making being. He rejected bracketing, believing that it was an impossible enterprise, as time and context shaped our understanding (McConnell-Henry, 2009, p. 8).

research also requires a specific method in order to provide clarity, rigour, a systematic approach to research, and a road map for new and experienced researchers with which they can direct and evaluate their research efforts. IPA provides this specific method.

4.1.3 Features of IPA

Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 181) provide a list of features that are now identified with IPA:

- It is committed to idiographic (i.e., focusing on the specific and unique experiences of the individual being studied) analysis of individual interviews, while balancing the claims of individual participants against the overview provided by aggregating the analysis from a group of research participants.
- It tends to draw from small samples of from six to 10 participants, in order to have depth of analysis with sufficient breadth to provide points of convergence and divergence.
- Participants tend to be homogeneous, particularly regarding the specific aspect of experience that is being researched.
- IPA makes use of the semi-structured face-to-face interview as the primary and preferred means of collecting data.
- IPA tends to focus on life events that have had a significant impact on the life of the participants, involving issues of identity, personal meaning, suffering, and loss.

The interview process generated 30 hours of interviews, which were analysed over a period of four years. The participants had an opportunity to read and comment on the aggregated findings in September–October 2022, and to compare them with their own experiences. The seven participants who read the first draft of the aggregated findings said that they faithfully reflected what they had shared. Semi-structured interviews were the main means of collecting data and the events being discussed

undoubtedly had a major impact on the lives of the participants and the lives of those whom they abused, as well as the families of the victims and the participants, the Marist Brothers and the Catholic Church in Australia.

Semi-structured interviews provide a structure for the interview that enables the researcher to prepare his/her questions in advance. It also enables the researcher to think carefully about the phrasing of questions to ensure that the language used is appropriate and will not cause offense. Smith and Osborn (2008, p. 59) recommend that the researcher prepare an interview schedule in advance, to think through the topics that the interview might cover, anticipate possible difficulties or points of sensitivity, and choose appropriate language The interview schedule for this research project can be found in Appendix 6.

IPA is particularly useful when the topic is complex or novel, or when it involves participants with unusual life histories or experiences. O'Sullivan (2010, p. 19), writing about the possible use of IPA with sex offenders, notes that this kind of research has the potential for serious repercussions as it may require asking participants to provide descriptions of events and experiences that could cause distress to themselves or to potential readers of the research.

4.1.4 Double Hermeneutic

IPA involves a dual process whereby the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their own world (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 181). The researcher then attempts to write about this experience in a way that the participant would recognise as a faithful representation of their experience (Braun & Clarke, 2013 p. 181). The insider stance has been described as a hermeneutic of empathy, whereby the researcher attempts to understand and represent as faithfully as possible the lived world of the participant. At the same time, the researcher adopts a stance of critical inquiry that has been described as a hermeneutic

of suspicion. "Suspicion" may be too severe a term, when what is intended is a stance that reflects on what has been heard in a spirit of critique and curiosity regarding possible meanings.

4.1.5 Method

The researcher begins by identifying a number of participants who share an experience that has significance for them that is worthy of study, and which is of innate interest in the lives of others (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 88). The individual, semi-structured interview is considered the ideal means of data gathering. After completing the interviews, the researcher then produces transcripts that require detailed and focused analysis. Immersion in the data leads to the identification of themes. These, in turn, are "reduced" to a manageable number of themes through a process of clustering. This leads to the identification of superordinate themes that are given a name. The researcher then writes a description of the data, remaining as faithful and close as possible to the shared descriptions provided by the participants, making use of their own words. He should note points of convergence and divergence, providing a written account of areas of commonality while providing nuance in order to be faithful to the idiographic intention of IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 79). The final stage of IPA involves writing a discussion of the findings that involve the researcher offering his/her own interpretation of the data. Brocki and Wearden note that the inductive nature of IPA allows researchers to make use of existing psychological theories, models, and approaches when interpreting the data that has emerged from their own interviews with participants (2006, p. 96). Some of these theories are used to explore the data in Chapter 8.

4.1.6 Critique

Brocki and Wearden note that while earlier IPA studies had made use of 30 and even 48 participants, that the research community has settled on six

to 10 participants as ideal for this research method (2006, p. 94). They call attention, however, to the fact that there is always the possibility that the data from one more participant could provide confounding evidence that would affect the conclusions of the study (2006, p. 94). As a result of this, it is important that researchers approach the task of reporting with humility, acknowledging the limits of what can be concluded from their data.

4.2   Insider Research

Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p. 59) describe insider research as "research by a complete member of organisational systems and communities." I am a Marist brother, but I do not belong to the Australian Province. I am not part of the day-to-day life of the Province, do not have the same shared history, and do not hold any position of authority in the Province. At the same time, I am personally invested in the Marist Institute and am emotionally committed to the well-being of the brothers and their good name. Merton (quoted in Roland & Wicks, 2009, p. 253) defined the insider as "an individual who possesses *a priori* intimate knowledge of the community and its members." I possess *a priori* knowledge of the Marist Institute and Marist life, along with detailed knowledge of the life of Marist brothers, the expectations of Marist teachers and the challenges they face, but not of the particularities of the Australian Marist Province.

Brannick and Coghlan (2007) write about the role the organisational system plays in having a stake in the research. The initial idea for the research came from Brother Peter Carroll, the Provincial of Australia, who commissioned the research. The Australian Marist Brothers had already organised a Round Table on the topic of child sexual abuse by Marist brothers (2017), and other research projects had been initiated. Brother Peter Carroll's consent was necessary for this research project to proceed. As well as that, he was the "gatekeeper" with regard to making contact with brothers and former brothers who had abused children. The

Provincial demonstrated his commitment to the research by paying for my travel and accommodation while in Australia, and for the transcription of the interviews by a professional company based in England. He also approached the participants and provided the space necessary for the interviews to be undertaken in a confidential way. While this level of relationship on the part of the researcher and support from the Provincial could raise concerns about possible bias, it is important to note that this level of organisational support opened doors for the researcher and provided privileged access. That is to say, I was a welcome visitor to the Australian Province and quickly adapted to the expectations and lifestyles in the four different communities where I stayed while undertaking the research. The question of secondary access was also straightforward as the meetings with the research participants were organised for me.

Brannick and Coghlan (2007) view the insider researcher as "an engaged participant whose critical and analytical observation of the culture is integral to the research activity." They bring insight and pre-understanding from their own lived experience. It can be easier for an insider researcher to gain "primary access" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 67), to establish a good rapport with the participants, who may be more inclined to trust the researcher, and share significant aspects of their personal story, providing the thick data that is the primary source for this kind of research (Roland & Wicks, 2009, p. 253).

Insider research has also been criticized as it can lead to a lack of objectivity. The perceived closeness can lead to over identification and "over-rapport" with the participants (Roland & Wicks, 2009, p. 254). Alvesson (2003) noted that insider researchers have "a personal stake and substantive emotional investment in the setting" and the well-being of the participants.

Barry O'Sullivan, a Roman Catholic priest who interviewed six Roman Catholic priests about the impact of the abuse crisis on priests who had not abused children, wrote that being a brother priest made it easier to

establish rapport and that the level of trust and sharing was facilitated by this relationship (2018, pp. 54–55). Tourangeau, similarly a Roman Catholic priest who interviewed other priests and brothers about sexual abuse and aspects of personal life history including sexuality, wrote that they "were more amenable to welcoming one of their own into the individual and organisational lives" (2017, p. 14).

Being an insider researcher can provide ease of access and levels of trust and understanding which may not be possible for other researchers. Concerns about insider research are valid; but the advantages of being an insider researcher outweigh any disadvantages, as long as the researcher is aware of his/her own subjectivity and is open to bracketing his/her own prior knowledge as far as possible (Tourangeau, p. 113), and that he/she can engage reflexively in the process of undertaking the research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 72). I agree with Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 55) who write that "there is no neutrality. There is only greater or lesser awareness of one's biases." With that in mind, I approached the research trying to hold my background, training, values, and theories in mind. Blind spots are exactly that: aspects of ourselves that we are not able to see. We can only uncover them through supervision and the discipline of ongoing reflexivity and awareness.

4.2.1 Reflexivity and Subjectivity

It is impossible to engage in phenomenological research without bringing your own subjectivity and self-awareness to the research process. This requires a reflection on the aspects of the life of the researcher and his/her previous experiences, beliefs, values, assumptions, theories, and understandings that have influenced his/her approach while listening to the experiences of the participants in the research. Personal reflexivity describes the process by which the researcher brings these aspects of self to conscious attention and actively engages with them as part of the research process, trying to identify how aspects of the self may be

influencing the research process, the interviews, or the interpretation of the findings. There are aspects of my own experience and values, which I wrote about at the beginning of Chapter 1 and in the section on Values (below), that have a bearing on this project. I will now highlight the key aspects of my own subjectivity that I believe have influenced my approach to this research project.

In the first place I am Marist brother. I experienced formation as a Marist brother between 1975–1982, a decade or more after the formation period experienced by the older participants, and at roughly the same time as the three younger participants. I have held positions of leadership as a Marist brother and have travelled widely in the Marist world. I have a sense of loyalty to the Marist Institute and my sense of personal identity is linked to this religious institution. At the same time, as a result of my professional education and values, I am convinced that the only way to deal with the subject of child sexual abuse by members of any group is to be transparent, and to co-operate with the statutory authorities, even when this is embarrassing and damages the reputation of the organisation.

I have worked as a therapist and psychologist and have a belief in the intrinsic value of every human being, with a desire to support their growth in self-awareness and healing from past hurts. I hoped that the interview process, while painful, would ultimately prove beneficial for participants and, based on the feedback from the participants, this proved to be the case.

My belief in the intrinsic value of every human person is rooted in the Christian teaching that all men and women are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Pike (2024, p. 2) writes that we should never forget the radical nature of this inclusive Biblical vision, when read in the context of creation stories from other Near-Eastern cultures of that time. This vision, which has provided a foundation for Christian influence on the development of laws and human rights, is reflected in the first sentence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):

> Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. (Preamble)[55]

Pope John Paul II referred to the belief that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God as "the basis of Christian anthropology" (General Audience, 17 November 1999), and Pope Francis has developed this idea as part of his promotion of the dignity of all human beings:

> It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. (*Fratelli Tutti*, 8)

Those who have committed sexual offences, as well as being judged and receiving punishment by society, are victims of stigma, exclusion, opprobrium, and the process of "othering" (Keenan, 2009), which is a way of distancing and alienating those who are considered unacceptable or of no value to society. In the prison system sex offenders need to be segregated for their own protection. Malhotra and Gussak, who provide art therapy to convicted sex offenders, note that they are seen as "inhuman, undeserving of our compassion, and attention" (2022, p. 15). If every person is seen as a loved creature of God with a capacity to reflect something of God's image, then we are invited (and sometimes challenged) to look beyond specific behaviours or aspects of their personality to their deeper humanity and shared membership of the body of Christ. Pope Francis, in *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018), wrote:

> For in every one of our brothers and sisters, especially the least, the most vulnerable, the defenceless and those in need, God's very image is found. (81)

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[55] See: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights. Accessed, 9 March 2025.

In a discussion of punishment as an ethical response to the treatment of sex offenders, Gay (1993) wrote: "In the community brought into being by Christ's resurrection the essential principle is that no one's welfare is to be pursued at the expense of someone else. It is within this community of the resurrection that the image of God becomes reality" (1993, p. 46). In the way that Jesus engaged with the woman taken in adultery (John. 8: 1–11), I believe that approaching all people—in this case sex offenders, who are often vulnerable and in need—with a non-judgmental stance which enables them to continue to participate as members of the human (and Christian) community is essential to their rehabilitation and recovery. This belief recognises that they do not forfeit membership of the moral community despite their behaviours which have caused damage to others.

I have worked as a therapist with sex offenders and victims of sexual abuse (2000–2003) As a result of this training and experience, I learned the importance of inquiring into the specificity of sexual behaviours, to better understand the combination of factors that might have contributed to a sexual offence, and to protect against the danger of making assumptions, based on prior experience or theories, about a person's motivation to behave in a particular way. The direction and focus of some of my questions were led by the theoretical knowledge and experience with sex offenders that I brought to the interviews.

Marie Keenan's book *Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church* (2012) was particularly influential, especially her three conclusions that the priests and brothers whom she interviewed: felt powerless in the Church but had power over children (2012, pp. 238–239), had absorbed a spirituality of perfectionism and aspired to a perfection in the area of celibacy that they could not live (2012, pp. 245–247), and were rule-keepers (2012, pp. 240–242). I found these explanations about clerical sexual abuse persuasive and expected to find evidence of these hypotheses in the interviews. These findings and assumptions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

4.2.2 Values

Denzin and Lincoln make the bold claim that "the practicalities of qualitative research can help change the world" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. x). They propose that what is required is a "critical framework of . . . heart, hope, love, care, forgiveness, healing." These values are consistent with my own values as a human being and a Christian, and as a member of a Roman Catholic religious order. They add that qualitative research "speaks to those who are on the margins" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. x). Positivist research methods have been critiqued for objectifying human participants or mispresenting their lives, views, and values. Denzin and Lincoln note that:

> Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations. . . . Subjects, or individuals, are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts or stories about what they did and why. (2018, p. 17)

Qualitative research, by choosing to prioritise, hear, record, and analyse narrative data, making use of participants' own words, is able to allow these voices and views to be heard, reducing or limiting as far as possible, the values, judgments, and biases of the interviewer.

It is difficult to think of a more marginalised group in Church or society than those who have sexually abused children. Qualitative research, "grounded in the intrinsic worthiness of Homo Sapiens" (Christians, 1995, p. 66), which intentionally engages with the voices of marginalised groups, and which seeks to offer hope, healing, love, care, and forgiveness, is appropriate to a research project that wishes to allow the voice of men who have abused children to be heard.

4.2.3 Where Do I Stand?

Keenan asked, with reference to her work with victims of sexual abuse and with perpetrators: "Where do I stand? (2012, p. xxi-xxii)" It is a profoundly ethical question as the victims have suffered due to the behaviour of the perpetrators and clearly are deserving of our sympathy and support, and for advocacy on their behalf.

I found myself asking a similar question when I worked with sex offenders, and also worked with the mothers of victims and with adolescent female victims of abuse. I found, in practice, that it was not difficult, as both victims and perpetrators had a claim on my desire to bring healing to people whose lives, desires, personal histories, and behaviours had led to experiences of hurt or distress.

As a 'brother" in the Church, I aspire to be a brother to others, and to avoid the "othering" that can take place in our culture. Priests and brothers who have committed sexual offences can be victims of "othering" within the Catholic Church as well as in society (Keenan, 2009), and I endeavour to stand with people who are marginalised or alienated in this way.

4.3   Reliability and Validity

The validity of qualitative research is supported when the research is plausible, where the data can be shown to be accurate, and the research has been undertaken with rigour. Morse (2018, p. 797) writes that "to validate is to confirm with the phenomenon itself." This relates to the ability of the researcher to demonstrate that the data is as accurate as possible and that it is related to and provides access to the phenomenon being researched. This also relates to the responsibility of the researcher to provide evidence of an audit trail that can offer evidence of the source of the data and its reliability. This can, in turn, be supported by validation checks on the data,

for example by inviting participants to read over transcripts to ensure that they faithfully represent what they said during an interview.

The participants were sent copies of the transcripts after the interviews in 2020 and 2022. Some made small adjustments, but there were no significant changes to what was transcribed. The participants had an opportunity to read the first draft of the aggregated data in August–September 2022. When I met with them, they said that the aggregated data faithfully reflected what they had shared in the individual interviews.

Tracy (2009, quoted in Morse, 2018, p. 804) suggested that demonstration of the excellence of research was another way to support validity. This can be done in a range of ways:

- Selection of a worthy topic
- Rich rigour
- Sincerity
- Credibility
- Resonance
- Significant contribution
- Ethical and meaningful coherence.

The topic of this research is, I believe, worthy of study and is clearly significant for the Marist Brothers, the Australian Church, and the wider society, all of whom have an interest in understanding the sexual abuse of children by members of religious orders. The sincerity of the undertaking and of the researcher has been discussed above in relation to my membership of the Marist Brothers and my concern for the well-being of victims and perpetrators. For Swinton and Mowat (2006, p. 45) resonance offers a degree of transferability, as this indicates that the value and meaning of the study extends beyond the particular participants involved in the study. They also suggest (2006, p.116) that a study's credibility

emerges from the thickness of the research data, which is dependent on the rigour with which the researcher has undertaken the study.

Morse notes that reliability and validity need to be built into the whole process of inquiry. It is not sufficient for a researcher to declare that the results are reliable or to have this recognised by reviewers (2018, p. 804). This indicates that the choice of a methodology and rigorous adherence to a particular method of research also support validity. In this case the choice of qualitative methodology, based on phenomenology and interpretation through the particular method of IPA, provides a standard and a set of guidelines against which the research can be compared and judged.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that researchers need to consider the "trustworthiness" of a study. Morse (2018, p. 801) notes that there can never be absolute proof of trustworthiness, but that a compelling study can be persuasive, and that this offers validity in qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln's four criteria for trustworthiness are:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

These can be demonstrated through the audit trail, the rigour of the methodology, the researcher's in-depth engagement with the topic (Yardley, 2008, p. 248), careful case analysis—including divergent data— and the involvement of external checks through supervision.

Finally, the researcher can seek "concordance" with other theories and researchers (Morse 2018, p. 809). As will be seen in Chapter 8, there are significant points of convergence between the findings of this research and the research undertaken by Faulkner (1998), Keenan (2012) and Winship

(2012). The results are also consistent with what has emerged in the work of commissions of inquiry (Chapters 3 and 7). It is to be hoped that a phenomenological study with a particular group will confirm what is already known from other researchers and will bring added information and value to what is already known.

Yardley (2008, p. 250) ends her chapter on validity by noting that the motivation for doing everything possible to ensure the reliability and validity of a study is to enable research to have an impact. This is important if a researcher endeavours to "answer questions that matter to people and society." This research was the result of the expressed desire of the Australian Provincial of the Marist Brothers. It mattered enough to the participants to give their time, share their experience, and put themselves in a position of vulnerability. Many people are interested in the results of this project. I have no doubt that the questions it raises matter to people and society, which is all the more reason to ensure that everything possible has been done to ensure the validity of the research.

4.4   The Participants

The eight participants in this research were Marist brothers at the time that the abuse occurred. Two of them chose to leave the Marist Brothers and two were dismissed from the Order. All of them were Catholics from birth. Four of the participants attended the Marist juniorate (before the changes that resulted from Vatican II) and four attended a Marist High School before becoming postulants, which is the first stage of formation for religious life in the Catholic Church. The average age of entry to the Marist Brothers was 17.85 (range: 16–20). As can be seen from Table 4-10, five of the participants entered Marist formation before the changes that came as a result of Vatican II. Their experience of formation was very different from the three participants who experienced formation in the 1970s.

Table 4-10

Marist Formation of the Participants.

Name	Age of entry	Initial formation before Vatican II	Initial formation after Vatican II
Andrew	18	x	
Bernard	17		x
Christopher	17		x
Dennis	20	x	
Edward	16	x	
Frank	18	x	
Grant	18	x	
Howard	19		x

As can be seen on Table 4 – 11, six of the participants were able to continue in some form of ministry after being informed about allegations of abuse by the Marist Brothers that came from the alleged victims or their parents (Andrew, Christopher, Edward, Frank, Grant, and Howard). Dennis was informed by the police directly, at which point the Marist Brothers were informed. None of the participants returned to ministry once the police were involved in investigating their alleged offences.

Table 4-11

Dates of being Informed about Allegation(s) of Abuse and Continuation in Ministry.

Name	Marist Brothers informed	Participant continued in ministry	Informed by police
Andrew	1962	Yes	2008
Bernard	2002	No	2003
Christopher	1991	Yes	2007
Dennis	No	No	1996
Edward	1983	Yes	2003
Frank	1967	Yes	1995
Grant	1991	Yes	1995
Howard	1988	Yes	1996

Three of the participants were victims of sexual abuse in childhood (Andrew, Bernard, and Howard). The length of years during which the abuse of children by the participants took place ranges from one to 30 years, with an average duration of 13.6 years.[56] The average number of victims is 32; but given the range in number of victims from one to more than 60, this statistic may not carry much meaning. Howard had one victim. Christopher, Dennis, Frank, and Grant had an average of 4.5 contact victims. Christopher had many non-contact victims, two of whom were known to him. Bernard had 10, Edward had 20, and Andrew had more than 60 victims. Two of the participants referred to having a diagnosis of paedophilia (Chapter 3). It is not clear whether or not Grant was a paedophile or if significant sexual underdevelopment was a key part of his personality as he did not become aware of any attraction to adults (young adult men) until he went to prison. This is also when he first experienced masturbation, which is a developmental milestone for a majority of adolescent boys and part of normal sexual development. Two of the men identified as adult heterosexual men (Edward and Christopher), while three (Bernard, Dennis, and Howard) identified as adult homosexual men. Those with a diagnosis of paedophilia did not express a strong attraction to adults, but both said they were not attracted to men (Andrew and Frank).[57]

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[56] $((4.5 \times 4) + 1 + 10 + 20 + 60)/8) = 13.625$.

[57] Dr Gwen Adshead (2021, p. 205), a retired forensic psychiatrist and psychotherapist who worked for three decades in prisons and secure hospitals in England, wrote: "The majority of people who are convicted as child sex offenders are not simply paedophiles; many are married or partnered and have an ordinary sexual interest in adults." A diagnosis of paedophilia does not mean that the person lacks an ability to be sexually interested in adults. This is part of the complexity of sexual disorders.

Table 4-12
Information about Abuse and Sexual Orientation.

The abuse	Victim of abuse	Abuse began	Abuse ended	#victims	Paedophilia diagnosis	Orientation
Andrew	x	1959	late 1980s	>60	Yes	Heterosexual
Bernard	x	1973	1987	10		*Homosexual*
Christopher		1987	2016	>3		Heterosexual
Dennis		1982	1991	3		*Homosexual*
Edward		1962	1975	20		Heterosexual
Frank		1962	1967	7	Yes	Heterosexual
Grant		1968	1991	5	?	*Homosexual*
Howard	x	1988	1988	1		*Homosexual*

Note 1. Christopher had one victim of abuse in 1987, and digitally adjusted images of children in 2016 to produce abusive images of children, two of whom were known to him personally.

Note 2. All contact victims were boys, aged between 8–16 years of age. Some of the victims of digital abuse by Christopher were girls. Most of the abuse took place in boarding schools (Chapters 3, 5, 7, and 8).

One of the participants (Grant) died between the first and second set of interviews.

4.5   The Interview as the Source of Data

In qualitative research the methodology often requires the use of personal interviews with participants and the interviewer is his/her own instrument for the gathering of data. This usually requires the recording of interviews and the transcription and storing of the data.

The task of the interview is to enable the respondents to talk about an important part of their lives and to make sense of this experience. The interviewer and respondent engage in a dialogue, and the interviewer can focus on specific aspects of the narrative that are particularly salient for the research project. The respondents should be given maximum opportunity to tell their story in their own words. Listening to a person's story is more than an exercise in data collection; it is also an act of sacred trust.

Refraining from offering interpretations to respondents about their own lives is not simply a technique to ensure that the researcher collects rich data but is also about honouring the person's life. The motivation to hear these stories is firstly to better understand how abuse took place, and secondly to acknowledge the humanity of the men who abused, and who expressed regret and shame at their actions.

4.5.1 Interviews and IPA

Swinton and Mowat (2016, pp. 61–62) observe that a research interview is not like a normal conversation as it lacks the mutuality that is part of ordinary life experience. There is a difference in the balance of power. The interviewer is the person with knowledge, who has prepared in advance and who has initiated the conversation with a specific purpose, and which requires that the respondent make him or herself vulnerable so that they will share information that is of interest to the researcher. The interviewer is normally a "professional" who brings experience and training to the task. He/she has an "agenda" and a certain amount of control about what will be shared and discussed, and which aspects will be deemed to be significant or of less importance in terms of the purpose of the interview. Swinton and Mowat's observations remind us that this is not a counselling session even though the respondent may find aspects of the process self-revelatory and possibly therapeutic. This is particularly important for researchers who have training in counselling and psychology.

Regarding the subject of power, Creswell (2007) notes that the desire to please the interviewer could lead to saying things or agreeing to reflections from the interviewer as a result of the human desire to be co-operative and viewed as friendly and supportive of the research project. This does not require any manipulation on the part of the interviewer but can be affected by the respondent's legitimate needs to avoid conflict and enhance their self-esteem. Similarly, Schein & Schein (2011, p. 64) state that "from the clinical point of view, it is not possible to interact with another human

being or group without influencing them to some degree." This is not something that can be "controlled for" and it has to be accepted as part of the research process.

4.5.2 Preparing for the Interviews

I prepared the interview schedule in November 2019, and shared this with my supervisor. I was aware of the need to establish rapport with the participants before exploring the issue of the abuse of children, and I wanted to gather background data about family history, early sexual experiences, vocation story, joining the Marist Brothers, experiences in formation, and early experiences in community and ministry. I then wanted to focus on the factors that the participants believed contributed to the abuse. I then wanted to explore the area of spirituality at the time of abuse and after discovery, sentencing, and imprisonment, to see how the participants lived their spirituality after the crisis of the revelation of abuse and how they made sense of their lives.

4.5.3 First Interviews: February 2020

I began the interviews by sharing about my background and my interest in doing the research, and by thanking the participants for their generosity in being available to participate. I then gave a general outline of the focus for the first session, which was designed to reduce any anxiety and to avoid any sense of this being an interrogation or directed interview. I started with a general question about their family background, and how they became a Marist brother. I imagined that this would be familiar territory and would not require too much effort to remember or share, even though some of the participants had painful experiences from their childhood and early Marist years. Some of the participants asked if I wanted to interrupt them to ask more specific questions, but, following Smith and Osborn's advice, I assured them that I was happy with how things were proceeding and that if

I had specific questions that I would ask them, which I did when appropriate.

This schema lent itself to a three-stage interview process, which took place during a single morning. The transcripts are coded sequentially. For Bernard, Christopher, Dennis, Edward and Howard, interviews 1–3 took place in February 2020, and the fourth interviews took place in October 2022. I had two interview sessions with Frank in February 2020, and the third interview with him took place in October 2022. I had two interviews with Grant in February 2020. Grant died between the first and second set of interviews and, as a result, there are only two recorded interviews with Grant. There were three long (more than one hour) and two shorter interviews with Andrew in February 2020, and two one-hour interviews with him in October 2022, as well as a phone conversation in November 2022, and a conversation that was not recorded in October 2024, after which I made notes.

The interview process developed quite naturally with most of the participants. We stopped for a break after the first and second interviews, and I took the participants for lunch at the end of the interviews. The tea/coffee breaks provided necessary moments of respite from the intensity of the interview process. They also provided natural breaks when the focus of the different interviews changed, as will be explained below. The tea breaks also provided an opportunity to build rapport with the participants who had been invited to share aspects of their lives and behaviour which they found embarrassing and shameful, with the potential to cause personal distress. This rapport was essential to gain the trust of the participants and to create the context where the participants could feel free to share about their experiences as honestly as possible. These moments of informality offered opportunities to talk about other aspects of their lives. The invitation to lunch was a way of expressing gratitude for their generosity and openness. They were enjoyable occasions which provided opportunities to "decompress" after being invited, as part of the interview process, to re-engage with painful aspects of their past.

I kept the interview schedule at my side and read it before the end of the last session. (With two of the participants the interview took place in two sessions rather than three). Only on one occasion did I need to contact a participant by email in order to ask a question that I had not covered during the actual interviews. I received an immediate response that will be used in the results section.

4.5.4 Second Interviews: October 2022

At the end of the first interviews I told the participants that I would send them a copy of the aggregated findings, and that I would meet them when I next visited Australia (which had already been planned) to ask if the aggregated findings reflected faithfully what they had shared with me and to ask if reading the aggregated findings led to any further insights. The second set of interviews provided an opportunity to ask follow-up questions as a result of analysing the data from the interviews.

During the initial interviews I did not ask about grooming, the process by which offenders prepare the victim for abuse through special treatment, giving gifts and/or gradually desensitising the victim to encroach on personal and physical boundaries, in case this was experienced as judgmental and could interfere with the need to establish a good relationship with them. I felt confident in asking this question during the second set of interviews. Six of the seven participants who were asked about grooming recognised the ways in which they had selected and groomed their victims.

The second set of interviews lasted one hour each. As mentioned above, one of the participants (Grant) had died between the first and second interviews and one of the participants (Andrew) contacted me to ask to meet a second time. All of the participants spoke positively about the text with the aggregated findings. However, reading the aggregated findings

did not lead to significant new insights. The narratives that they shared during the second interviews were consistent with what was shared in February 2020, with occasional moments of insight or reflection as a result of questions that I was able to ask in October 2022. I found this disappointing at first; but on reflection, I concluded that the consistency in the narratives provided a way to support the reliability of the findings. Consistency of presentation after a gap of two and a half years would be difficult to sustain, unless the stories being shared in the first instance were as honest and accurate as the participants were able to share, based on their level of insight at that time in their lives.

4.5.5 Deception

Sex offenders are known to make use of denial, rationalisation, and minimisation as defences, and it is not possible to understand how abuse happened unless the participants share as honestly as possible. It is also possible that a participant could hold certain delusions about his own behaviour and motivation. It should be noted that limitations in self-awareness are an aspect of being human, which all of us exhibit to greater or lesser degrees.[58] There is no "fool proof strategy" (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008, p. 48) for identifying deception.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2008, p. 47) note that honest error can occur anywhere, though deliberate deceit is more problematic. They suggest that usually it is possible to detect deliberate deception or sense when a participant is trying to control the description in some way. This can be seen, for example, when two of the participants used passive voice when explaining the abuse, which had the effect of distancing the person from their own actions. It can also be seen when explanations are offered that either minimise responsibility or attempt to move responsibility to the victim or

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[58] Maruna and Mann (2006, p. 161) write: "Taking responsibility for every personal failing does not make a person normal, it makes them extraordinary—and possibly at risk of mental illness." Human beings—including sex offenders—want to protect themselves from embarrassment and shame, the emotion that leads to a global feeling of being a less than worthwhile person.

to the situation. The ability to detect this deception is left to the judgment of the interviewer.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2008, p. 48) note that no claim for objective reality need be made. The purpose of the research is to explore the subjective understandings of the participants and not to interrogate these claims against some identified objectivity reality, for example, by comparing the accounts of the participants with court records or allegations of victims. I did not engage in this role as a therapist or as a detective, but as a humble inquirer, endeavouring to better understand how abuse happened in the lives of the participants.

The participants voluntarily agreed to participate in a research project where their conviction for the sexual abuse of children had been upheld in a court of law. They participated to support the commitment of the Provincial and the researcher to better understand the phenomenon of abuse in the Marist Brothers in Australia. Four of the eight participants were former Marist brothers and were not under any internal pressure or perceived community commitment to participate in the research, which required a commitment to share aspects of their personal history that were personally painful, embarrassing, and shameful. Given this level of exposure and vulnerability, and the commitment of all eight participants to support the research, it is hoped that any "calculated" self-deception would be less likely and would not be consistent with their desire to engage as honestly as possible.

4.6   Practical Theology

In undertaking research on members of the religious order to which I belong, I was attracted to the idea of situating the research in a department of theology, as part of my motivation for the research related not simply to seeking understanding from a social science perspective, but also from a faith perspective. Simply put: how can we understand the sexual abuse of

children by men who were part of a religious order, and how can we understand the journey of their lives after the abuse was discovered and they suffered the loss of their good names, their freedom, their public roles, and limitations on their life choices?

Swinton and Mowat (2016, p. xi) write:

> The common theme that holds Practical Theology together as a discipline is its perspective on and beginning point in human experience and its desire to reflect theologically on such experience. Practical Theology seeks to explore the complex theological and practical dynamics of particular situations in order to enable the development of a transformative and illuminating understanding of what is going on within these situations.

The starting point of this study was the phenomenon of the sexual abuse of children by men who were members of a religious order dedicated to the education and care of children. It is very difficult for "faith" to provide an understanding of this situation without returning to the "living human document" (Gerkin, 1984, p. 185), i.e., the life experiences, motivations, spiritual lives, and understandings of those who abused.

In order to further explore this phenomenon, I have explained the choice of qualitative methodology for this study and the use of IPA. While phenomenology may provide the "first word" in this study, it will not be the "only word," and with due respect to St Anselm,[59] this study could be described as experience seeking the understanding of faith.

There are three possible models for Practical Theology (Geary, 2010). The first relates to practices of care. The Church and religious orders, as well as many secular organisations, have acknowledged their failure with

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[59] St Anselm described theology as *"Fides quaerens intellectum"* (faith seeking understanding), in Proslogion, (II– IV). https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Proslogion#Chapter_I. Accessed 3 April 2024.

regard to the care of children, and they have put in place policies and procedures to ensure that children are protected as much as possible. There has also been the development of Theologies of Safeguarding, which have emerged from the Christian tradition of care for children and the necessary response to the failure of care that was evidenced in government and church inquires. Fleming, Keenan and Zollner's edited book (2003) *Doing theology and theological ethics in the face of the abuse crisis*, Sheveland's (2003) *Theology in a post-traumatic Church*, and Chapters 5–8 of *The Cross of the Moment* (Jones, Pound & Sexton 2023), are examples of the development of theologies of safeguarding in the Catholic Church.

A second model involves the exploration of a Biblical story, metaphor, or theological insight which, when applied to a particular situation, can bring understanding and meaning that is not available from a purely psychological or organisational perspective. After reading the transcripts and hearing the stories of disruption to the participants' life stories, identities, and spiritual lives, and how they rebuilt their lives after discovery and incarceration, I was struck by the significance of their identity and role as brothers in their accounts of the abuse of children. As discussed in Chapter 2, brotherhood is a rich theme in Christian theology and history, and the issue of the abuse of children (mostly boys) who were brothers (monks) in the course of the history of the Church can shed light on the abuse of children by professed brothers in the Church in the recent past. The participants were Marist brothers when the abuse took place, and this was the context in which they abused children. For these reasons, brotherhood suggested itself as a valuable perspective for this research project. This will not simply be an example of adding a "thin theological veneer" (Graham, 2020, p. 33), but of understanding the data from this perspective.

How those who have offended attempt to rebuild their lives is important to them personally and has implications for their ability to refrain from further abuse. The ways that the participants developed new identities and a spiritual life will be explored from the perspective of "good lives" and

"redemption scripts" (Chapter 8). The choice of the word "redemption" by Maruna (2001), a criminologist, to describe the life narratives of former offenders who manage to create meaningful, rewarding lives without returning to criminal behaviour, situates the research in the context of Practical Theology, as do explorations of feelings of guilt and shame, which will be explored in Chapter 8.

A third model of Practical Theology relates to critical reflection on an aspect of Church practice. Part of the motivation for this research was to collaborate with the Marist Brothers in Australia to better understand how abuse could ever have happened in this organisation. Whatever light can be shed on how aspects of the Marist system and culture (Chapter 7) in some way contributed to the abuse of children will also be part of the Practical Theology dimension of this research project.

Finally, the experience of the participants will be explored from the perspective of moral injury, which can also be applied to the victims and bystanders who have been affected by the abuse of children by priests and members of Catholic religious orders.

4.7   Summary and Conclusion

This chapter began with an explanation of the choice of qualitative methodology for this research. The following points were discussed:

- The positivist tradition and its limitations for research with human subjects;
- Qualitative research and the choice of interpretive phenomenological analysis for this project;
- The place of values in research and my own reflexivity and subjectivity as a researcher;
- Issues related to deception, reliability, and validity in qualitative research;

- Insider research: advantages and disadvantages.

I provided a description of the participants and of the research process that took place during two sets of interviews.

At the end of the chapter, I discussed the decision to undertake this research within the discipline of Practical Theology and the added value of reflecting on the abuse of children by Marist brothers from the perspective of brotherhood.

In Chapter 5 the findings related to the participants' experience of Marist brotherhood will be presented. In Chapter 6 their explanations of the factors that they believe contributed to the abuse will be explored, and in Chapter 7 the aspects of the Marist Brothers as an organisation and culture will be discussed in the context of reports of investigation of child sexual abuse by priests and brothers in the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS:

THE PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES OF

MARIST BROTHERHOOD

In this chapter I will share the themes that emerged from the findings regarding the participants' experiences of brotherhood, and membership of the Marist Brothers in particular. Brotherhood for the participants was more than a role: it was a vocation, and the Marist Constitutions identified building brotherhood as the primary mission of the members of the Institute:

> Being brother and building up brotherhood is our primary mission.
> (*Constitutions and Statutes*, 1985, 39)

How, then, did the men who had abused children experience this brotherhood, especially after their abuse had become known? In this chapter I will explore the following themes:

1. Their experience of having a vocation to be a Marist brother
2. Intimacy, relationships, and sport
3. Positive and negative experiences of Marist life
4. Discovery, arrest, and the response of the Marist Institute.

The participants' reflections on personal factors that contributed to the abuse will be presented in Chapter 6, and their comments on formation, leadership, and the Marist work ethic will be discussed in Chapter 7. Their observations about spirituality will be presented in Chapter 8.

5.1   Vocation Story

Vocation is seen as a way of responding to a call to serve God. Individuals can hold a mixture of motivations in their decision to join a religious order. In the transcripts it is possible to hear "approach" and "avoidance" motivations (Emmons, 1999, pp. 55–59).

5.1.1 Approach Motivations

Andrew and Bernard said that they became brothers partly out of admiration for a particular brother:

> The monk[60] that taught me in Grade 6 . . . I wanted to be like him. (Andrew, 2, 1189–1202)

At this point in the interview, Andrew had been speaking about the death of his father, and he said that when this brother whom he admired left the Marist Institute "my life fell away, fell apart when he left . . . it left a hole in my life and I carried on" (Andrew, 2, 1195). These two experiences of loss were significant for Andrew when he spoke about his early life. He also said that many other brothers who were significant in his life left during his years as a brother.

Bernard said, "I suppose 'cos I admired them I always wanted to be a teacher" (Bernard 1, 160–161). He added: "I felt respected and loved by them too" (Bernard, 1, 481–482). It appears that the sense of being respected and loved was part of what drew him to the Marist Brothers in the first place.

Christopher, Dennis, Frank, and Howard were drawn by the lifestyle of the brothers whom they knew:

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[60] Australian Marist brothers often refer to each other as "the monks."

> The community side, the lifestyles. (Christopher, 1, 129)

> But when I then was with the brothers . . . I started to really warm to their spirit and the educational model and how they . . . taught, what I was experiencing in the . . . interaction with the brothers. (Dennis, 1, 186–189)

The life of the brothers, and the way that the participants saw them relating to each other and to young people, exerted a positive pull for these young men.

Christopher, Frank, and Howard were influenced by fellow students who had decided to join the Brothers:

> I wasn't sure what I wanted to do or anything in Year 12. At the time my parents weren't keen on the idea and asked me to wait 12 months. They thought might've been cos it was, you know, two of my best friends going. (Christopher, 1, 130–133)

Frank said unequivocally that he believed that being a Marist brother was what God wanted him to do with his life:

> Why I became a brother . . . what led me to, is quite a mystery . . . but given that I have abused, I still believe that God wanted me to be a Marist brother. (Frank, 1, 234–239)

Grant had contact with the Brothers at school, and then decided to join them after visiting a vocation exhibition.

> And the Marist Brothers had a stall and a display, and it was at that stage that I thought I might become a Marist brother. (Grant, 1, 123-124)

Grant was a very introverted young man, and he enjoyed the sports and camaraderie he found in the juniorate.

5.1.2 Avoidance

The participants also reflected on what might be called "avoidance goals," i.e., motivations to become a Marist brother that had their foundation in something that the individual found difficult or challenging. Christopher found the experience of trying to establish romantic relationships difficult, and becoming a brother seemed to be a way to avoid having to navigate his way through relationships with women. Bernard and Howard said that part of their motivation related to avoiding having to deal with being gay:

> You know, I was pretty scared about the whole heterosexual thing . . . this expectation to get married and all that sort of stuff and sexually with women, and it seemed to me that, "Oh, I could join the Brothers and take a vow of celibacy," and all of that would go away. (Howard, 1, 258–262)

The life of the brothers seemed appealing, and he would be able to avoid difficult aspects of sexuality. Joining the Brothers was also a way to leave their families for Bernard and Howard.

> I think also it was mainly finally being rebellious and saying, "Well, this is a way to leave home and start my independence." (Bernard, 1, 487–488)

For Howard, it was a way to escape a "toxic" home environment. For Bernard it was a step towards independence, and for Dennis, the Marist Brothers offered a far more affirming and happier place than he was experiencing at home with his father.

Edward's vocation developed in an unusual way:

My mother became very, very ill . . . I went to visit her in hospital.

. . . She didn't know who I was. . . . It was one of the most horrific

experiences of my life. . . . And I said to God, "You look after

Mum . . . I'll become a brother." (Edward, 1, 266, 284–5)

Edward stayed faithful to his "deal with God," and proceeded to join the

Brothers. This idea of a "deal with God" reveals a theology where you can

bargain with God, but you then have to keep your side of the bargain.

Table 5-13
Vocation: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1a	Approach: Attraction to brothers	A, B, C, D, F, H
1b	Approach: Becoming a teacher	B, D, H
2a	Avoidance: Sexuality	B, C, H
2b	Leaving family	B, D, H
3	A deal with God	E

5.2   Positive and Negative Aspects of Marist Life

I was interested to explore the impact of Marist life, including formation,

on the participants' lived experiences as brothers, and how this may have

contributed to the abuse of children. This topic, including obedience, will

be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. There are three subordinate

themes:

1.   Intimacy, relationships, and sport

2.   Positive: mentoring and affirmation

3.   Negative: infantilisation, humiliation, lack of support.

5.2.1 Intimacy, Relationships, and Sport

The participants spoke about the culture in Marist communities where there was an emphasis on work and sport, but little on personal sharing:

> I suppose in many communities we lived . . . and watched TV together. We worked together. Did we really talk to each other? Did we share? . . . Yes. And I think that's the biggest thing is one of the things I realised from the second novitiate[61] . . . realising celibacy, the need for intimacy is a very important thing. It's a human desire. It's a motivator for all of us. (Christopher, 3, 513–514, 535–538)

Dennis learned very quickly that he would be valued for his work and that there would be little room for affective needs:

> I can pick out exactly the point, the matter, that right through from when I joined in the juniorate my experience was of the Marist Brothers being the same as Dad and the family, that there was no real affective embrace connection in the Brothers. It was, "You are a worker. And because you are a good worker you are doing God's work as a Marist brother." But there was never any outreach to me. It was only that I was valuable because of what I could do. (Dennis, 3, 486–492)

Grant said that he took a passive approach to life: "But again, I did the listening. I didn't reveal much of myself" (Grant, 1, 866). He also spoke about the role of sport: "Brother [X] was keen on sport and therefore I was too." (Grant, 1, 848)

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[61] The "Second Novitiate" was a six-month sabbatical experience, based in Switzerland or Rome, for spiritual renewal which was offered to brothers in mid-life.

Andrew, Frank, and Edward made similar comments about the importance of sport in their formation and during their years in ministry. Howard was not very interested in sport, but this was more acceptable by the time he joined the Brothers (1970s).

Commenting on the lack of intimacy, and the emphasis on work and sports, Dennis said:

> It was work. It was commitment. It was adult relationships are out, personal relationships, out, male or female, out. We were enclosed at the novitiate with fences and one of the novices I remember saying to him one day, Brother [Y] had told him to go down and paint the front fence. He said, "I can look at some normal people." (Dennis, 3, 458–462)

These quotations paint a picture of a lack of human formation, no practical formation with regard to celibacy, lots of emphasis on work, and of sport being prized and offered as a means of escape for some of the participants. Regarding sex and sexuality, Howard remarked with the benefit of hindsight:

> But certainly, being able to talk about it would've been one of the ways to deal with the issue at the time. . . If guys had been able to be brave enough to say, "Look, I'm gay and I'm struggling with such and such," there would've been so many other guys in the same boat. (Howard, 3, 490, 514–516)

It appears Bernard, Christopher, and Howard, who had more positive Marist formation experiences (mid-1970s), did not avail of the opportunities available in the novitiate to deal with personal issues in the area of relationships and sexuality.

5.3   Positive Aspects of Marist life

The participants had many positive things to say about their experiences of Marist life. Their comments can be divided into three areas:

- Experiences of affirmation
- Mentoring
- The care they received after allegations of abuse.

5.3.1 Experiences of Affirmation

Some participants shared positive comments about experiences of encouragement and affirmation that they had received during their lives as Marist brothers:

> And the team would eventually say to me that "you're one of the best people ever." (Christopher, 1, 698–699)

> And this brother said to me, "Some people are good at fixing boats and other people are just good to have around." (Edward, 3, 61–62)

They also spoke about brothers who impressed them, who were "magnificent," (Andrew, 1, 117), "on the way to becoming very human," (Edward, 1, 798–799), "wonderful," (Frank, 1, 266). Frank said of another brother that "he used to say a prayer before the lesson, and I could just imagine God being there through him" (Frank, 1, 233–234).

Howard reflected that "I'm not just blowing my own trumpet here, but I was an effective administrator and principal" (Howard, 2, 643–644). Christopher mentioned things he did that the brothers appreciated and said that "the Brothers was a place where I felt accepted, respected" (Christopher, 2, 651).

5.3.2 Mentoring

The participants had good experiences of brothers who were mentors or who were fatherly and offered encouragement. Speaking of one brother, Andrew said, "He spoke to you as though you were his child" (1, 132). Dennis spoke about a brother who got him involved in maintenance work on the property, and noted, "Reflecting back, it is exactly what I wanted to do with Dad" (Dennis, 1, 159). Edward had good experiences of brothers who supported him in his early years of teaching when he was asked to teach subjects for which he was not prepared.

As a young brother, Bernard noticed that some brothers were physically affectionate to students:

> I'm not saying that [they] were inappropriate in terms of breaking the law, but seeing them I thought, "Okay, well, that must be part of relating." (Bernard, 2, 702–703)

Bernard decided to emulate this way of being a Marist brother and during the interview was able to connect this way of thinking to his abuse of students:

> The huge thing was being a brother meant being this caring, loving, compassionate person. And for me that meant being physically affectionate. (Bernard, 2, 729–731)

Perhaps the most positive aspect of the Marist way of life that emerged in the interviews was the care and support the participants received after being accused and found guilty of abuse. This will be discussed at a later point in this chapter.

Table 5-14
Positive Aspects of Marist Life: Summary.

Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
Affirmation	All
Mentoring	C, D, E, F, G, H
Care and support	All
Importance of sport	A, C, E, F, G
Not involved in sport	D, H.

5.4   Negative Marist Experiences

5.4.1 Humiliation, Lack of Support

The participants spoke about negative experiences of Marist life, especially when they felt discouraged, not valued or listened to, or infantilised. The topics of obedience and infantilisation will be discussed in Chapter 7 in the context of Marist culture and the theologies that were part of it.

Andrew reflected on lack of support at times in his life as a brother:

> As in most things, I was not consulted, spoken to, nor supported in very little of my work. (Andrew, 4b, 1050)

Dennis had many negative experiences in formation houses. On some occasions he challenged decisions or did not accept restrictions that he felt were petty. He experienced these moments as repetitions of the difficult relationship he had with his own father:

> It certainly played into it for me because of my history with Dad and with the formators, that really, I was . . . put down all the time.

. . . I've spent my whole life with my identity being what I can . . .
do. (Dennis, 3, 100–103)

Edward spoke about lack of support from his confrères:

I became aware that my life was in a sense seeming to make sense
to the parents and to the students . . . but in a sense I didn't receive
any affirmation. (5, p. 6, 439)

Table 5-15
Negative Aspects of Marist Life: Summary.

Theme	Participants who spoke about this theme
Humiliations	A, D, E,
Lack of support	A, C, D, E, F, G

5.5   Discovery, Arrest, and the Response of the Order

5.5.1 Arrest

The participants felt that they had been treated respectfully by the Marist
Brothers and the police. Bernard was informed about the allegation by the
Provincial (2002) and was initially told that the victim did not want to go
to the police. When the police did become involved (2007), more victims
had come forward. In the intervening period, Bernard was able to continue
to do work for the Institute. Arrangements were made for Christopher to
live in another community where he felt supported. Again, in his case, he
had been told that his victim did not want to go to the police. (He was
arrested a second time, many years later, and was found guilty of digitally
adjusting images of children, for which he received a prison sentence.)
Dennis said that he received a phone call during a major College event,

requiring him to go to the police station (1996). He appreciated the fact that the police did not come to the property to arrest him in a public way.

5.5.2 Marist Response

Six of the participants spoke positively about the way that the Marist Brothers dealt with them when they were informed about the allegation(s). Bernard and Christopher felt there was support, and Edward was informed by a brother who had been a classmate. He said:

> I assured [him] that nothing had happened since . . . so he said, "Okay, we leave it be." Like, he and I were very close 'cos we were in school together, and, like, [he] has been a great mentor to me over the years. (Edward, 3, 553–556)

Howard said that he was immediately called to Sydney (late-1980s), where he was able to talk about what had happened. After meeting a psychologist, who concluded that he was very low risk, he was able to resume his ministry in another school. He was then appointed as principal in two schools. Speaking of these appointments he said:

> I worked very, very hard. . .I did a lot of good things. Our school reputations were good, and I was very well loved in both of those communities. (Howard, 2, 534–555)

It was only when the victim's family informed the police, and the climate in Australia regarding sexual abuse had changed, that it was necessary to inform the local diocesan authorities, who immediately made the allegation public.

Andrew was called to meet the Provincial (1960s) when allegations were first received. According to Andrew, he went to the Provincial House:

> He was upstairs, and I was downstairs. And the interview was, "I
> believe you've got a little problem, Andrew.". . . And I said, "I
> think I have, Brother." And he said, "Well . . . you fix it up . . . I
> haven't got time to talk to you. . . . If I need to be, I'll be in touch."
> Never heard from him. (Andrew, 2, 198–202)

Grant also recalled a lack of an appropriate response from the Provincial at
the time. When asked how he felt about this response, he said:

> I suppose in a way disappointing because I wasn't listened to.
> Well, I was listened to but not classed as important enough to go
> any further. I did mention it in discussion with the local curate, and
> unfortunately, he panicked and he rushed off to the bishop; but
> again nothing occurred. There was no reaction, no talking, just
> saying, "Oh, it shouldn't have happened." (Grant, 1, 246–250)

Andrew and Grant felt very disappointed about the perceived lack of
response from their superiors. The other participants felt that they were
treated sensitively. Bernard, Christopher, Frank, and Howard were all able
to return to ministry in some way until the allegations were reported to the
police and the statutory authorities became involved.

The experience of discovery and of being named in public had a profound
impact on the participants, who spoke about feelings of fear, anxiety,
depression, embarrassment, and anger. One participant momentarily
thought of ending his life while driving. The response of the Marist
Brothers was perceived as supportive, particularly for those who did not
immediately have to deal with the police, and where opportunities for
ministry and community support were found for them. Andrew and Grant
were critical of the response of Provincials, though the Provincials who
dealt with allegations more recently (1980s onwards) appear to have
handled them better. The participants did not speak about being treated
badly by the police. On the contrary, there seems to have been some
sensitivity to their situation and a desire to avoid embarrassment. Four of

the participants said that they pleaded guilty to things they had not done, but did not agree with all of the allegations made against them. All participants pleaded guilty when confronted with the allegations either by the leadership of the Marist Brothers or the police.

Table 5-16
The Impact of Discovery: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1	Acknowledgement of offence	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
2	Feelings	B, C, D, E, F, G, H
3	Exposure and shame	C, D, F, H
4	Some allegations untrue	A, B, E, F, G
5	Arrest	B, C, D
6	Marist response	All

5.6   Loss of Marist Life and Ministry

One of the significant consequences of an allegation of abuse, once it is dealt with by the statutory authorities, is a loss of ministry and, for some, a decision to withdraw from the Marist Brothers or to experience dismissal. Given that all participants had lived as Marist brothers for at least 20 years, being a Marist brother was the context in which they formed their identities. Their values, life goals, professional employments, friendships, and future hopes were all involved in Marist life. The removal of this life structure involved a significant loss and was experienced as a shock or even a trauma for the participants, for whom it represented a profound change in their lives.

5.6.1 Identity and Belonging

Andrew said, "I never felt at any stage that I wanted to be anything but a part of this group" (Andrew, 2, 854–855). Bernard had hoped that he would be able to remain as a Marist brother after he left prison, as he found community life and prayer life meaningful (Bernard, 3, 142, 206–207, 211). However, he received a letter from the Provincial a year before he left prison that indicated that the Provincial Council did not favour this option. He spoke about a sense of abandonment when he read the letter, and a fear of returning to the "dark place" of self-hatred that had been so destructive in his life:

> And the sense of, "Yes, I should hate myself because people hate me in the Order now." . . . And I suppose that fear of rejection, that fear of returning to the dark place of self-hatred, is one reason I'm very wary of having contact with brothers. (Bernard, 3, 506–507)

Since this news came in a letter, he was left alone to deal with his feelings. Later the Vice-Provincial visited him. He described the meeting as follows:

> And he said to me, you know, "What are you . . . thinking about for the future?" And he said to me . . . "Look, being very honest . . . I don't see much of a future for you in the Order." But he said it compassionately and he said it in a way that made me feel "he's caring for me." That's when I thought and made the decision, "Well, okay, I will leave." (Bernard, 3, 355–363)

This compassionate approach enabled Bernard to avoid descending into his dark place, and to make the life-changing decision to leave the Marist Institute where, as he was told, there was realistically no future for him. Bernard found his life as a Marist brother "fulfilling," and initially lamented the loss of what had provided the structure and meaning system

for his life (Bernard, 3, 215–216). He came to see that he probably made a better choice for himself:

> I think I'm relieved not to be part of the Australian Province. (Bernard, 3, 404–405)

Christopher felt the loss of connection with the Marist Brothers and community life (Christopher, 2, 343). He also spoke of heightened moments of belonging:

> I know for me that the time I felt most connected to the brothers would be a jubilee mass in the chapel . . . or a funeral. There was something powerful. For my first novitiate, singing was a very big part. . . That was just wonderful. And we used to sing a lot of the modern hymns at masses and things and just a group of us together singing, *Salve, Sub Tuum*[62]—anything else—would always send chills down my spine, make me feel very proud. And a brother's funeral, at the graveside. (Christopher, 2, 864-874)

There is a sense of nostalgic reminiscence in Christopher's recollections, and sadness for what has been lost. Christopher also clung on to his desire to be a brother:

> And different people would challenge me, "Why do you still wanna be a monk?" I'd say, "But I love the monks. I've always felt part of it," da-da-da. And that made me angry and hurtful, you know, like. . . but then thinking, "What have I got for a future?" . . . I felt like I had a home within that. (Christopher, 2, 337–339, 647–645)

While feeling accepted as a brother in the Province, Edward spoke of not being able to participate in certain events:

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[62] The *Salve Regina* and *Sub Tuum Praesedium* are two Marial antiphons that are part of Marist liturgical and devotional tradition.

And I was there as a brother. I was accepted as a brother. I don't go to brothers' gatherings because it's easier if I don't . . . especially if there are people other than brothers present. (Edward 3, 931–932)

Frank spoke in a similar way:

So it's out maybe all over the world, such that in my restrictions, I don't go to school reunions . . . I'm saddened by the fact that I can't join the Marist Association.[63] It doesn't worry me necessarily; but part of my restriction is I can't wear my habit[64] to brothers' funerals and things like that. (Frank, 1, 457–458, 2, 498)

The importance of bonds of loyalty were discussed in *The Cross of The Moment* (Jones et al., 2024) as part of a discussion of religious communities as families. This report also explored the "unusual and complex" (Jones et al., 2024, p. 78) relationships that exist within religious orders as a result of the deep sense of belonging that is experienced by the members.

5.6.2 Ministry

The ending of relationships and loss of work can have a profound effect on individuals, especially if the change happens suddenly. The revelations of abuse did not immediately lead to loss of ministry for Andrew, Bernard, Christopher, Edward, Frank, Grant, or Howard. The change happened when the statutory authorities and Catholic Church policies began to require exclusion from ministry, what has come to be known as "zero tolerance."

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[63] The Marist Association was created to take responsibility for Marist schools in Australia. It involves lay people and brothers, and the leaders are mostly lay people.

[64] The habit (black or white) with cord, crucifix, and rabat is the official Marist dress.

Bernard did translation work for the Institute before he was charged and put in prison. He had hoped to find a way to be of service once he left prison:

> I really felt I could go back to a ministry within the order of helping the older brothers or looking after a community if all the others went out for their ministry work. . . . But then this made me feel "no, no, you're not welcome, you're not wanted." (Bernard, 3, 341–347)

Christopher commented about the impact of this change on his own situation:

> The Provincial said that "things are changing in terms of the approach to people who've abused, and the advice is that we'd have to pull you out of school." . . . Your whole life's been involved around that. That . . . was a bit of a shock. (Christopher, 2, 71–74, 78)

Frank spoke about the impact on his own ability to be a minister of the Gospel to others:

> One of my pains now is that my ability to be a Christ giver to people is very limited. There are ways that I can and I do. (Frank, 1, 530–531)

Grant was also aware of the limitations that he now faced:

> There's going to be a few challenges, partly because all my qualifications and so on were devoted to school. . . . And I took a course in gerontology after. . . . But then again that's been withdrawn. (Grant, 2, 633)

Howard knew that most aspects of Marist ministry would be closed to him:

> So I enrolled in a course at university. . . . But also I didn't wanna
> put the Brothers in the situation of having to deal with me, you
> know. . . . [It] was . . . limited what they could do with me if I'm
> not teaching. . . . And so much, so many of the houses are in school
> situations and I could see that it was just gonna be a nightmare for
> them. (Howard, 2, 606–610, 757, 761–762)

Howard decided to leave the Institute, partly as what gave meaning to his
life was no longer going to be possible for him, and partly to protect the
Marist Brothers from the burden of finding suitable employment for him in
a challenging environment. He had lost many of the things that were
worthwhile and enriching, and after leaving prison, he took the opportunity
to leave the Marist Brothers (Howard, 2, 793–794). He took the initiative
to train in an area where he would be able to find employment outside of
Marist religious life and without contact with children.

5.6.3 Loss of Achievement and the Good that was Done

Two participants lamented the loss of appreciation for the good that they
had done. Dennis, reflecting on how it felt to read the impact statement
from one of his victims, said:

> And it's just such a complete cancellation out of everything that
> was good that had been done. . . . And all of a sudden, "monster."
> It's all gone. Forget that. That doesn't matter. . . . It's just the
> monster—period. I can understand it. It's such a trauma, so
> traumatic and a betrayal and a let-down; but, yeah, there are both
> sides. (Dennis, 3, 579–583)

The use of the word "monster" by one of his victims had a profound
impact on Dennis. He felt hurt as the positive things he had achieved
seemed to be overlooked. From one perspective, Dennis is holding on to

what seemed good and of value, though the suggestion of there being "both sides" can be read as an attempt possibly to minimise but certainly to hold the good aspects of his ministry in balance with the damage caused by the abuse.

In a slightly similar way, Edward said, "The people who've brought these charges—and I'm not blaming them—but nobody ever mentions the amount of time . . . like, I was three weekends out of four in the mountains with . . . kids" (Edward, 2, 329–332). Like Dennis, Edward is lamenting the loss of these good experiences of ministry with young people and is hurt that these are forgotten about as a result of the allegations of abuse.

Andrew was saddened at his loss of ability to have contact with children. He said, "It hurts me immensely" (Andrew, 4, 823–824). Edward lamented the loss of his ability to be of service to children: "If these allegations had not been raised . . . I know I'd be helping kids" (Edward, 3, 1073–1075).

Frank regretted that he was not able to know what had happened to those whom he had abused:

> I know that people aren't allowed now, it's not recommended that the abuser meets the abused, and I understand why. And I don't know if I ever wanted to do that. I mean, it's a bit of a pain knowing not much about them. . . . There's that distance of not knowing. One of the boys I abused . . . I know that he's died since and I don't know whether there was anything about . . . that sort of history. I could do without being stupid about it . . . [it] is to hold them to God from me because of what of I've done. (Frank, 1, 746–757)

Frank's last comment reveals his sense of guilt and remorse, and his faith. He holds his victims to God, wanting God's care for them, as there is nothing that he can do directly or personally to communicate his concern to them.

The abuse of children, and the process of discovery, arrest, pleading guilty, sentencing, incarceration, and living with restrictions, had a profound effect on the participants. They experienced multiple losses, including loss of freedom through incarceration and then freedom of residence and/or ministry. Four of the participants are no longer Marist brothers, and this involved a loss of identity and membership of the Marist community that had provided structure, meaning and purpose for their lives. Christopher lost the ability to participate in Church in the way he would like. Howard no longer has a belief in God, involving the loss of the Church and faith as well as membership of the Marist Brothers. None of the participants can have contact with children, and opportunities for work or ministry are more restricted. There was a loss of family contact for some, and also a loss of security. These losses are life-changing and, for some, traumatic, and required an ability to draw on significant personal resources in order to create a new life, as well as support from others. These issues will be discussed in Chapter 8 from the perspective of psychological research.

Table 5-17
Loss: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1	Loss of Church and faith	C, H
2	Loss of Marist life and ministry: identity and belonging, achievement, and ministry.	All

5.7 Marist Support

The Marist Constitutions (1985) spoke about caring and offering support to members who were in need of help. One of the ways that the Marist Institute fulfilled this part of their commitment to those who abused was through providing individual therapy and the opportunity to participate in

therapeutic programmes. They also continued to provide accommodation and other supports. More than anything, individual brothers continued to offer ongoing contact, friendship, and support.

Andrew, who lives in a care home that is paid for by the Marist Brothers, is supported by a brother who keeps contact with him and who looks after a range of practical services on his behalf. He said:

> I've never had a bank account. I don't know anything about things like that . . . haven't got a clue. But the Brothers are looking after me. Well, there is no doubt about that part. (Andrew, 2, 882–886)

Andrew feels looked after and is grateful that something as practical as managing a bank account is taken care of for him.

Bernard received support from some individuals, as well as help from the Brothers as an organisation. He began by referring to one individual, before mentioning support from the Marist organisation:

> He was my sort of contact person. . . . He helped me and bought . . . clothing. . . which the Brothers paid for. And they paid medical expenses. But I had to apply for the unemployment benefits . . . and that's what I've lived on since I got out of jail. (Bernard, 3, 383–390)

Bernard was advised not to make his decision about staying or leaving while he was still in prison, and took the decision soon after he was released. He did not have financial resources; but the Brothers have ensured that he has enough for his needs:

> The Order bought a small studio apartment . . . where I live now. . . . It's big enough, and I pay a much-reduced rent. . . . And they give me medical insurance if ever I have to have big operations or anything. (Bernard, 3, 450, 454–455, 463)

The Vice-Provincial, who met him in prison, stayed in touch with Bernard, which Bernard greatly appreciated.

Christopher spoke about some individual brothers who have been supportive: "And the brothers have been wonderful in terms of the close ones" Christopher, 2, 539). He said of one person in particular, "He's been my life support through all this. He's been incredible" (Christopher, 1, 371–372). He said that part of his motivation to participate in the research was his sense of indebtedness to the Brothers:

> My instinctive reaction was "yes." I owe the Brothers so much in terms of their support and everything else and the pain, of course, I can never repay. (Christopher, 2, 552–554)

Edward spoke of the support of individual brothers:

> As luck would have it . . . no, it wasn't luck, it was providence. [A brother] came down to [X] in that week and I took [him] into my confidence and said, "This is the situation." [He] came with me to the police interview but wasn't allowed in but waited for me outside. And was very close [support] for me for the next three months before any charges were laid. (Edward, 3, 567–572)

He also spoke of the brotherhood he experiences in his life today:

> I feel a great sense of compassion from the brothers. (Edward, 3, 926–927)

Edward also spoke about his sense of being valued by the brothers and his ability to give something in return:

> And I really believe that I have a capacity to spread a great deal of goodwill among the brothers. . . . Like, one of the brothers said to

me . . . "You have . . . built up such a reservoir of goodwill with the brothers. They will support you." (Edward, 3, 1103–1103)

Edward's reflection captures the sense of not being abandoned or rejected at a moment in his life when he is vulnerable and has been publicly exposed.

Frank is aware that he is fortunate that he is able to remain as a member of the Institute:

> What should've happened, I don't know, in reality maybe I should've been told to leave the Brothers. I'm glad I wasn't but today it would be the police. I mean . . . if I offend now . . . I've been told it's in the ways of the brothers who run the Institute that I'd be dismissed straightaway.[65] (Frank, 1, 644–648)

He also asked for, and received, an apology from the Provincial for the part the Marist Brothers as an institute played in his abuse:

> Met with him at a Brothers' house . . . and he put his arm around me and said, "I'm sorry." And then before I left he said, "Well, what apology do you want?" I said, "I don't want it anymore. I've got it." (Frank, 1, 680–682)

Frank said that "I do believe that the brothers love me very much' (Frank, 1, 653–4). Receiving this apology was a moment of healing for Frank, which helped him to let go some of the anger he felt about what had happened in his life.

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[65] Frank is referring to changes that were made to the Constitutions of the Marist Brothers at the General Chapter that was held in Columbia in September 2017, which made dismissal from the Institute mandatory for sexual offences against children, unless the Superior General responds to a request from the Provincial to allow the individual brother to remain. This will be discussed in Chapter 9.

When Howard was informed about the allegation of abuse (late-1980s), he travelled to the Provincial House. For a number of months he met with a brother who was a clinical psychologist, which he found helpful. Initially, he was told that the victim's family did not want to go to the police. When the victim did inform the police (mid-1990s), Howard was informed and removed from his new ministry. The local diocese also decided to inform the media. Speaking of his time in prison he said:

> I got through it. I had extraordinary support from people during that time. . . . Monks from everywhere coming to see me. So it was so much more in the earlier days of this and I think people were probably a lot more supportive. (Howard, 2, 712–716)

He received support from individual brothers. The Marist Brothers also paid for counselling and study for a qualification to provide a basis for a new career once he left prison and departed from the Marist Institute:

> The Brothers have twice now supported me by providing me with counselling and clinical psychological support and so on. And I'm eternally grateful because that also has helped me to deal with it and has contributed to me being a much better person than I was. (Howard, 3, 372–375)

Reflecting on the Brothers as a group and his experience as a Marist brother, Howard said:

> By and large the Brothers have been phenomenal. (Howard, 2, 780)

> So, you know, I think sometimes what my life would've been like if I had it over again, you know. Would I join the Brothers? No, I wouldn't have with the value of hindsight. Do I regret that I joined the Brothers? No. I think they are the most amazing group of men. (Howard, 2, 316–319)

5.8   Rejection and Painful Experiences

Some participants had experiences of discouragement or of not being listened to. Howard, who was grateful for the support that he received, also had a moment of rejection when he returned to a school where he had taught in the past:

> I went back . . . at one stage and the headmaster there wouldn't let me on the property. You know, it's okay. . . . So that was difficult. But, you know, I decided that I would. . . make a fresh start with my life. (Howard, 2, 784–785)

The eight participants experienced varying levels of individual and institutional support from the Marist Brothers. Four of the participants said that they had had experiences of Province leaders in the course of their lives where they did not feel listened to, in ways that might have helped them to avoid the circumstances where the abuse took place, or could have intervened to prevent it from continuing. Two of the participants spoke about negative experiences after the abuse where they felt rejected and unwelcome. Overall, it appears that the commitment and spirit of brotherhood was strong in the Australian Marist Brothers. All the participants received individual and institutional support, though there were also moments of discouragement, rejection, and not being listened to.

Table 5-18
Marist Support: Summary

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1	Marist institutional support	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
2	Marist personal support	A, B, C, E, F, H
3	Not listened to in the past	A, C, D, G
4	Rejection/not welcome	B, H

5.9 Summary and Conclusion

The participants responded to questions about their lives as Marist brothers, beginning with their vocation to join the Marist Brothers and continuing with experiences of formation, ministry, and community life. They spoke about how the Marist Brothers, individually and as an institution, responded to them at the time when allegations were made, and once the police and statutory authorities became involved. The overwhelming message from the participants is that they were given support and often experienced kindness after discovery and through trial and imprisonment—with two exceptions. These responses reflect the value of brotherhood espoused by the Order.

The participants spoke highly of many Marist brothers, though they had mixed experiences of formation. Their accounts reflect many of the criticisms that have been made of the approach to formation before the renewal mandated by Vatican II. Those who experienced formation from the 1970s onwards said that the practicalities of living a life of celibacy were not presented to them, but that they also did not make use of opportunities for counselling which were available to them. Their experiences of Marist life and ministry were mostly positive, with some moments and experiences that were discouraging or difficult. Some Provincials did not appear to respond well when informed about abuse, and the participants reported times when they did not feel that they were listened to.

All of the participants spoke positively about their current lives, despite the limitations they experience, and the sadness they carry as a result of their past behaviour. It is noteworthy that it is Howard, who left the Marist Brothers, who no longer sees himself as a member of the Catholic Church and who no longer believes in God, who makes use of Christian theological language to make sense of the journey from the exposure, pain,

and "death" of abuse, discovery, criminal trial, imprisonment, losses, etc, to establishing a new meaningful life, which he summarises in the word "resurrection," and that he calls "an Easter thing" (Howard, 3).

CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS:
FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE
ABUSE OF CHILDREN

The findings regarding the factors that contributed to the abuse of children will be presented in this chapter. As well as inviting the participants to share their understanding of what, on reflection, had influenced their behaviour, I invited them to return, as far as possible, to the time when the abuse took place, to access, as best they could, their awareness of the factors that led to the abusive behaviour. It is likely that the participants' understanding of the abuse was more developed at the time of the interview than it was when the abuse took place. This may have been due to: time and distance from the abuse; the effects of ageing; the experience of discovery, court proceedings and imprisonment; group and individual therapy; spiritual direction; some reduction in feelings of shame; and reading about the developing story of clerical abuse in Australia and other parts of the Catholic Church, as well as in other sections of society, and how their personal experience forms part of that developing story.

In this chapter I will present the findings from the participants in relation to their best recollection of what was motivating them at the time of the abuse, as well as their later broader understanding of personal factors that contributed to the abuse.

The findings will be presented in six sections:

1. Personal factors
2. Deficits
3. Unmet needs
4. The process of the abuse
5. Exculpatory narratives

6.	Seeking help.

# 6.1	Personal Factors

6.1.1 Adverse Childhood Events

Research (Grady, Levenson & Bolder, 2016) suggests that there is a relationship between adverse childhood events (ACE) and abusive behaviour in later life. This can be as a result of traumatic incidents or significant losses, where there is a felt sense of an absence of affection in the person's life. Andrew, for example, referred on a number of occasions to the fact that his father died when he was young, and how this had an impact on his need for affection:

> I was pretty susceptible to anybody who wanted to cuddle me in any way, shape or form, be it word or action . . . because I had no dad. (Andrew 1, 952–953)

Andrew later spoke about a significant Marist brother who left while Andrew was in formation and how this was a second loss for him.

Dennis, who was the eldest in a family of 11 children, spoke about the conflict with his father, especially when he did not achieve academically at the high school he attended. He said:

> I yearned for a close relationship with Dad but nothing I . . . did was ever good enough. . . . That was always a problem for me, a challenge, just always disappointed. (Dennis, 1, 70–71)

He had a deep sense of anger against his father, and said that he lived with an ever-escalating expectation with regard to work and achievements, which could never satisfy him. He found outlets in work and in the Scouts,

and in the emotional and sexual consolation of mutual masturbation with male friends.

Howard also spoke about family of origin issues, saying that his home was emotionally "barren" (Howard, 3, 20). His grandmother, who lived with the family, was a source of considerable tension and trauma.[66] His grandmother favoured his younger brother, setting up conflict between them. He gave this example:

> It was a Saturday. Mum and Dad were at work . . . and something happened . . . she got stuck into me in front of these two friends. . . . I started crying, you know, even at, like, 14 or 15 or whatever age I was. It was just so overwhelming. Next thing she says, "Oh, look at the sookie baby. Look at the sookie baby," and she pulled her breast out and said, "Suck on this, little sookie baby," in front of my friends, you know. It was, it was just so horrific. . . . They just didn't know what to do about it either, all of 14 we were. It was just mortifying. (Howard, 1, 192–200)

During his first year of teacher's college after high school he had an "almighty blow out again with Grandma" and his brother, and left home to stay with his elder sister. Howard was aware of mental health and addiction problems in his family which he believes had an impact on his own development:

> My two brothers were alcoholics . . . and the younger one is also a drug addict. Both of them are dead. . . . My mother was a gambling addict. Mum had major mental health issues. I would say . . . that she was manic depressive. . . . And in the next generation I've got a nephew in Brisbane who's an alcoholic and I've got a niece in Sydney who's a gambling addict.

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[66] The anonymous priest who shared his testimony in *Slayer of the Soul* (Rossetti, 1991) also had a difficult relationship with his grandmother. He wrote (pp. 104–105), "I still have a lot of resentment against my grandmother. . . . I felt manipulated by her."

> So I sometimes, and this is just in me trying to deal with things, wonder if whether this is my addiction, that this is in the family genes; there's this predisposition to addiction of some sort. (Howard, 2, 919–931, 935–937)

There is a body of research that links ACEs and attachment deficits with sexual abuse (Levenson et al., 2016). While it would be unwise to ignore this research, it also needs to be said that there are many people who experienced traumatic events in their past and who can be described as experiencing insecure attachments, who did not go on to abuse. While these explanations of the participants demonstrate a level of personal insight and have validity, they are insufficient on their own to explain the sexual abuse of children. ACEs will be discussed with reference to psychological research in Chapter 8.

6.1.2 Delayed Development

Delayed sexual development is often referenced as a contributor to the abuse of children, as those who abuse may feel more comfortable relating emotionally with children than with adults (Finkelhor, 1984, pp. 38–39). Andrew, Dennis, Edward, Frank, and Grant experienced formation in the late-1950s or 1960s. Bernard, Christopher, and Howard experienced formation in the mid-1970s, after the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council and with significant societal changes in the area of understanding and speaking about sexuality and human development.

Andrew spoke as if he was competing with the victim: "Well, if you can do that, I can do better" (Andrew, 2, 403).

Bernard spoke about feeling that he was equal to the students:

> I really saw myself as being equal to them . . . like, on the same
> level. (Bernard 2, 1223–1225)

Bernard was not equal to the students, but at an emotional level he felt that
they were equal, and this was partly as he did not feel comfortable with
adults. He said that he did not have "the confidence in myself to see
myself as an adult" (Bernard, 1, 836).

Christopher also referred to developmental issues when he said:

> It's more as if I was experimenting like a teenager 'cos I never had
> a teenagehood. In many ways it was like I'd been regressing almost
> so many years of my life so there wasn't even a thought about it.
> This was just nice. This was something new, "wow," you know. It
> was more all focused on me. (Christopher, 1, 919–923)

Christopher uses the word "regressing" which is the psychological term for
people who are acting and feeling in a way that is more appropriate for an
earlier stage of development. Later he added, "I think I've always had an
immaturity" (Christopher, 2, 624) (John Jay, 2011, p. 28, ARC, 2017, Vol.
16, book 2*,* pp. 755–759).

Edward said that he was naïve when it came to sexuality and he only
began to develop adult sexual awareness when he began to meet adult
women, teach senior schoolgirls, and meet the mothers of his students. His
abuse of boys to whom he gave massages took place before these
developments. He made this connection towards the end of the third
interview:

> I knew there was the awakening of sexuality, but we've put the link
> in with sexual curiosity which is a big learning link for me today.
> (Edward 3, 735–737)

Frank was particularly aware of developmental issues and how they may have influenced his sexual behaviour:

> In the novitiate we didn't really have what my psychologist later told me was normal sexual development. . . . The psychologist would tell me that quite a lot of [the] reason for abuse is mostly that they didn't have a good psychosexual development. Hardly any connection with girls or women. (Frank, 1, 181–182, 283–287)

Grant made similar observations based on feedback from a psychologist:

> And somewhere in her document she said that I was stunted, and I was still at the age of 13. . . . And I think for me that was probably pretty true, that I hadn't grown up. (Grant, 2, 1009–1010, 1014)

Grant did not develop adult sexual feelings until after discovery and imprisonment. Masturbation, a statistically normal part of adolescent male development, did not become a feature of his life until he was in prison. It should also be noted that masturbation was considered a mortal sin and being able to resist masturbation at the time when Grant was at the juniorate would have been considered as virtuous and morally approved behaviour (Chapter 8).

Howard was also aware of developmental struggles regarding sexuality, which were compounded by the shame he felt as a gay man in the Australian and Catholic context when he was growing up.

These excerpts reveal the perceptions of the perpetrators who said that developmental factors helped them to make sense of and to explain their abuse of their victims.

6.1.3 Victim of Sexual Abuse in Childhood

Three of the participants had experienced sexual abuse in their own childhood. Andrew was abused when he was nine years of age by a cousin who was 12/14 years of age:

> Even at my dad's funeral in 1941 I was interfered with by a cousin. (Andrew 1,229)

During the first interview, Andrew shared a booklet about his life, where he refers to abuse by a Marist brother (Andrew, 1, 429–430). Andrew was also abused by other boys, who were around 16–17 years of age, when he attended the Marist juniorate:

> I would simulate, you know, the sex. He would say to me: "Where is the hole?" He was older than I was. It was never enjoyable or funny. (Andrew 1, 605, 626)

> And they'd chip the wood and then they got in around it at night time or during the day and you'd go in there and they'd give you a cuddle and touch you up and things like that. (Andrew, 1, 1160–1162)

Andrew did not personally make the connection between his own abuse and his abuse of children. This may partly be explained by the fact that he did not see his behaviour as abuse until he participated in therapy.

Bernard, on the other hand, was helped to understand that his own experience of abuse probably had some bearing on his own behaviour:

> One question I was asked by my therapist . . . was I ever sexually abused and I said, "No, never." . . . And then we were talking, I was talking about my cousin . . . and that. He said, "That was

> abuse." And I said, "No, I felt . . . it made me feel good. It made me feel. . . ." He said, "No, it was abuse. It affected your behaviour, and conditioned your behaviour." (Bernard 1, 243–252)

Reflection on this experience enabled Bernard to make the connection between his own experience and his abuse of boys:

> One of the things I realised much later through the therapy was that the abuse I encountered as a child, it conditioned my behaviour so that I sexualised any relationship. (Bernard 1, 805-807)

Howard also experienced sexual abuse by a Marist brother when he was a 10-year-old boy. In an email sent after the interviews, Howard said that he did not believe that his own experience of abuse had any bearing on his own behaviour:

> No, I don't believe that what happened to me in year five at school had any impact on or was a contributing factor to my offending later in life. I said it made me feel awkward and confused, but wasn't something which dwelt with me throughout my life. (Howard, email, 16 February 2020, 1–3)

A victim of abuse does not need to dwell on their own experience of abuse for it to affect them in some way. However, Howard's perception of his childhood experience is that it was not a factor that contributed to his own behaviour with his victim.

The participants who experienced sexual abuse in their own childhoods had mixed responses. Andrew and Howard found the experience awkward, stressful, and uncomfortable. At the same time, Andrew enjoyed being touched. Bernard experienced the abuse by his older cousin positively as he interpreted it as a sign of being liked and valued, which influenced his own abusive behaviour as an adult.

Table 6-19
Personal Factors: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1.1	Adverse childhood events	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
1.2	Delayed development	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
1.3	Victim of sexual abuse in childhood	A, B, H.

6.2 Deficits

The participants shared about a range of aspects of their lives where they felt they had deficits. They believed that these deficits, along with the unmet needs that will be discussed in the following section, contributed to their abuse of children.

6.2.1 Lack of Self-esteem

Bernard, Christopher, and Dennis spoke about a lack of self-esteem in a range of ways:

> But I suppose one of the huge parts of my childhood and growing up was the total lack of self-esteem. (Bernard 1, 289–290)

He associated this with a strong fear of rejection, which explained his deep fear of anyone discovering that he was gay. This also helped him to explain that he could only abuse boys with whom he felt he had a relationship as any inkling of rejection would be enough for him to withdraw. He feared returning to "that dark place."

> I would not dare do anything if I felt there's a chance of rejection. (Bernard 2, 376–379)

Christopher was aware of being immature and mentioned his lack of self-esteem. He said that part of his fantasy life consisted of imagining his students being sexually active with a girlfriend, as he did not feel fully grown up in this area:

> My fantasy would be seeing . . . if I was there in a swimming pool and maybe one of the, say, 15/16-year-olds . . . the fantasy would be . . . what would he be like with his girlfriend? Okay, if that was me with a girlfriend, all that, yeah. (Christopher, 1, 990–993)

Dennis felt constantly criticised by his father and by some brothers who were responsible for his formation:

> Oh, I thought, "I can't do anything right. I can't do anything right."
> (Dennis, 1, 670)

Dennis felt that he was always trying to measure up and continually failing. This led to a certain drivenness in his personality when he joined the Brothers which led to unhealthy work patterns, with little room for rest and healthy recreation with other adults.

Edward also suffered from having to measure up to the standards of others, without being given the necessary education to fulfil positions he was asked to take on.

> I was so conscious of my inability, you know, lack of ability in what I knew, that you become very defensive and, like, I had the sport as well and . . . basically I wouldn't have been liked terribly much. (Edward, 2, 98–101)

Edward tried to adopt the role of the efficient and reliable Marist brother who took on far too much and was trying to measure up to impossible standards and demands, all while he was struggling to catch up with his academic commitments and other responsibilities.

6.2.2 Lack of Sexual Experience

Bernard, Christopher, and Howard each referred to the lack of sexual experience in their lives. Bernard was abused by a cousin and had experiences of masturbation with other boys. As an adult he visited gay saunas:

> I found it hard to live without a sexual expression in my life. . . . I found myself living an anonymous sexual life by going to gay saunas and things like that. And I found there an amazing freedom to be who I really was. (Bernard, 1, 873–879)

While Bernard's primary explanation for the sexual abuse was due to his perceived need for affection and relationship, he also sought sexual contact, which he felt was missing in his life. With the boys he received affection; but the sexual dimension was illicit and illegal: with the anonymous encounters, he experienced sexual satisfaction, but without the relational dimension.

Christopher became aware that he was using the abuse to have his own needs met:

> And I thought I was comforting the boy. Obviously, I wasn't. I look at it now and that was just all for my own sort of gratification and need. (Christopher, 1, 927–929)

Howard spoke about choosing not to have anonymous sex, even though he could have done. He was also clear that the focus of his abuse was sexual.

> I could've gone to saunas . . . I didn't. . . . But yet here was this thing that was in front of me, and I couldn't not do it. I couldn't resist the urge in me to touch a penis. (Howard 2, 180–182)

Bernard, Christopher, and Howard each identified the absence of
meaningful adult sexual contact as one of the factors that contributed to
their abuse of boys.

6.2.3 Lack of Affection

Relationships and affection needs emerged strongly in the explanations
offered by the participants. As mentioned above, Andrew said that he was
"susceptible to anybody who wanted to cuddle me," (Andrew 1, 951–952),
which he explained was due to the absence of his father who had died
when he was nine years of age.

During his experience of counselling, Bernard made the connection
between the very conditional love of his mother, the gratifying experience
of affection mixed with sexual experience with his cousin, and the abuse
of children:

> Conditional, totally conditional. And I therefore looked to the
> children . . . for affection. I felt totally inadequate dealing with
> adults because of my very low self-esteem. . . . I enjoyed the
> closeness, the physical closeness. . . . I felt this is something
> special, you know . . . and in my mind thought the student was the
> same. (Bernard 1, 821–827, 956–964)

Christopher came to an awareness of his need for affection, especially with
difficulties he was experiencing in his life and ministry:

> [I] was feeling all the pressure and the confusion and everything
> that's happening in the work world and the aggro. And then feeling
> comforted and somebody likes me, and this was wonderful.
> (Christopher 1, 910–913)

The sense of hungering for affection is almost like a *leitmotif* in the interview transcripts. When Dennis spoke about the abuse he said:

> I know that I was somehow yearning to be at that intimate level of connection again. That was how I felt pretty much all along the time, that I wanted this special connection with these three boys. A connection that I had never had in my life before, except when growing up with my mates with that mutual masturbation. (Dennis, 2, 713–717)

Dennis makes the explicit connection between the mixture of sexual pleasure, affection, and the concealed behaviour of mutual masturbation with his own abuse of his victims. He then reflects about the actual abuse:

> I really feel now, again in hindsight, I was quite inappropriately searching for a real affective relationship, and I was able to achieve this affective relationship with these young guys because I'd grown very close to them pre-abusing them. (Dennis, 2, 913–934)

Edward explained that, from his perspective, the abuse was a way to show care for the boys:

> All I can think of, and it's probably helpful, is there was a certain . . . degree of emotional closeness. (Edward 4, 14)

Frank also came to this awareness through his work with a psychologist:

> So in some way, with the help of a psychologist and looking back on it, I was looking for affection or a friendship. (Frank, 1, 409–410)

> I mean, I was thinking, you know, here am I showing some friendship or care . . . friendship/care/love to these students and it turns out to be exactly the opposite. (Frank, 1, 788–789)

Grant agreed when asked about the place where he experienced some kind of emotional connection:

> BRENDAN: There wasn't a lot in the community, and the place where there was a sense of emotional response and company was the 10-year-old lads.
> GRANT: Yeah. (Grant, 2, 870–873)

And while Howard is clear that his interest was sexual, he also said that he tried to show affection to the students:

> In some ways, I tried to be parent to these kids as well . . . which is probably not what they were looking for, so I wanted to show them affection and I'm not saying that I'm doing that for any altruistic motive. It was probably . . . more for my need rather than theirs, absolutely. (Howard, 2, 78–81)

Along with Christopher, Bernard, and Edward, Howard came to see that, while fulfilling the expectations of a "good" Marist brother in his teaching and supervision, he was also having his own needs met through the abuse. While the participants were mostly positive about their experience of Marist community and ministry, it would appear that there was more camaraderie than any depth of relationship, and that this may have contributed to the sense that there was a lack of human affection in their lives.

6.2.4 Poor Boundaries

Dennis and Edward mentioned their awareness of a lack of boundaries at the time of the abuse. Dennis said:

During that year I also found that I was going to [V's] room at night when I was visiting his place and we'd wrestle and, you know, which is again boundaries issues and all the rest of it. (Dennis, 2, 242–245)

Dennis's language demonstrates a growth in awareness that his behaviour was inappropriate, especially as he held two roles as dormitory master and family friend. The wrestling, touching, and sexual contact broke those unspoken but real boundaries.

Edward also spoke about the revelation that came with the introduction of the word "boundaries:"

I know this probably sounds silly, but I never heard the word for another 30 years was [sic] "boundaries." (Edward, 2, 850–851)

The participants were able to speak about boundaries and this is an indicator of the way that this word has become part of our awareness and vocabulary. At the time of the abuse, some of these issues were blurred and unclear to the participants, especially when they had other needs that were not being met.

6.2.5 Self-Regulation Difficulties

Frank and Howard mentioned not being able to control and regulate their desires. Frank said:

When I was attracted to do this and knew it was wrong, my discipline and self-control should've been "don't do it." (Frank, 2, 606–608)

Howard spoke about lacking the will power to desist from behaviour that he knew was wrong:

"I'm going to, I'm going to do this." And then the argument going

on inside my head . . . "This is wrong. You shouldn't be doing it.

It's not the right thing to be doing to the kid." (Howard, 2, 140–

143)

The participants lacked the self-regulation "muscle" (Baumeister, 2012) to

desist from sexual abuse; however, this was made explicit in the responses

of Frank and Howard. Self-regulation will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Table 6-20
Deficits: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
2.1	Lack of self-esteem	B, C, D, E, F, G, H
2.2	Lack of sexual experience	B, C, E, H
2.3	Lack of affection	A, B, C, D, G, H
2.4	Poor boundaries	B, C, D, E, F, G, H
2.5	Lack of self-regulation	F, H

6.3   Unmet Needs

The participants spoke about a range of unmet needs. Andrew, for

example, did not have an opportunity to study for his teacher's certificate

or to go to university (Andrew, 4b, 24–25) and Grant agreed that his

emotional and sexual needs went underground during his years when he

worked in schools (Grant, 2, 1056–1059). Howard said that "I was dealing

with my sexuality and unfortunately that's led to the offending that I did"

(Howard, 3, 411–412). The following themes in relation to unmet needs

emerged during the interviews.

6.3.1 Desire for Touch/Cuddling

All of the participants touched their victims in a sexual way as part of the abuse, and some of the participants spoke about experiencing a desire for touch and human contact, or a need to cuddle or be cuddled. One of the first things that Andrew said at the start of the first interview was:

I was a boy who needed cuddling. (Andrew, 1, 7–8)

Andrew spoke about touching and cuddling on a number of occasions in the course of the interviews, for example:

The kids would come and sit on my knee. . . . But . . . I ended up touching them and I've got no reason why. (Andrew, 2, 266–269)

Bernard, who later abused boys, mentioned a weekend seminar from a priest who advocated showing the students that you cared for them, and who gave touch as an example. Bernard recollected:

I remember too in my second year of teaching we did a weekend seminar with a . . . priest . . . and I remember him saying, "Look, it's important that you show the students you care for them." . . . "And it's important. . . . The best way you can do that is by touch, so putting your hand on their shoulder," and so that really forced in my mind "yes, that's what I'm doing. I'm showing that I care for them," you know. (Bernard, 1, 1086–1097)

Bernard also referred to cuddling the boys:

I believed I was showing affection. So, if kids were upset and homesick, yes, I'd put my arm around them and I'd cuddle them. (Bernard, 2, 176–178)

Frank believed that in touching the children he was doing something that they would like:

> I believed that I was doing something nice for me and maybe nice for the boy. (Frank, 1, 404–405)

For Howard, physically touching the erect penis of his victim was the primary focus of his abuse (Howard, 2, 202). It is clear that some of the ways that the participants attempted to have their human need for touch met were unhealthy and abusive.

6.3.2 Affection/Relationship

A number of the participants said that they believed that they had a relationship with their victim(s), and that they would not have pursued the abusive behaviour if this was not part of their experience. Andrew recollected:

> It was a desk in the classroom, and I thought he was just showing a bit of affection. . . . So, nothing happened. (Andrew, 2, 92–93)

For Andrew the abuse was also related to feelings of being accepted and valued by the students:

> These kids accepted me. These kids were putting their arms around me and saying they liked me. (Andrew 2, 275–276)

Bernard's abusive behaviour was bound up in choosing students with whom he felt he had a relationship. He told himself that the abuse was part of his care for them.

> I believed I was showing affection. (Bernard, 2, 175–176)

Affection and a feeling of closeness were central to Dennis's abuse also:

> I acknowledge that I had close affection for these three boys. And I
> sort of felt responsible for them, that I also felt that they were very
> close to me and regarded me very specially. (Dennis, 2, 518–520)

Grant abused boys whom he invited to help him to do work in the school
on Saturdays. He enjoyed their company and, since he did not sense any
resistance, allowed himself to think that the boys were enjoying these
experiences:

> I tended to tickle the boys under the arm or stomach, and that was
> about it. I don't suppose there was much thinking in it or anything
> else. It was just something that, well, caused enjoyment to the other
> person. And I suppose there was some enjoyment for me although
> it wasn't at that stage sexual. (Grant, 1, 222–226)

It is interesting to note that Grant adds the words "I suppose" with regard
to his own enjoyment of the tickling, almost as an afterthought or throw-
away comment, which could be interpreted as a way of distancing himself
from his own motivation for the abusive behaviour.

Edward became involved in offering sports massages to the boys. He had
developed a persona in the school as a disciplinarian, and the massage
gave him an outlet for the gentler, nurturing side of his personality. He
found this so rewarding that at one point he wondered about retraining as a
nurse:

> We've heard rumours that we've got a couple of brothers who are
> interested in nursing. I'm beginning to wonder, you know, am I
> even in the right place? (Edward, 2, 323–324)

> As one of the psychologists . . . pointed out to me at one stage, part of the difficulty with this was it seemed to me that a lot of the kids were very grateful for what I did. (Edward, 2, 131–134)

Howard, on the other hand, is clear that he had no desire to have a relationship with his victim:

> It wasn't that I wanted to love this kid. And in fact, I didn't want the kid to be part of it in the sense that I believed that he was asleep. (Howard, 2, 207–208)

Howard was interested in touching the boy's erect penis and he did not have an interest in an affectionate or friendly relationship with his victim. The other participants all expressed a desire for a relationship as part of the motivation to abuse.

6.3.3 Sexual Pleasure

Beech and Ward (2004) note that "the ultimate aim of deviant behaviour is to achieve pleasure or other primary or secondary goals (e.g., a sense of control)." Six of the participants made reference to the pleasure or satisfaction that they derived from the abuse, one was able to make a connection with sexual curiosity in the course of the conversation, and another struggled to identify a sexual element. Andrew accepted that there was an element of excitement for him, and spoke about having an erection, and also ejaculating when a boy was on his lap:

> I do not know that I ever invited a child to come and sit on my lap . . . particularly when I . . . knew that not every time but every now and then it would excite me. (Andrew, 2, 280–282)

During a conversation that took place on 16 September 2024, Andrew said that he would put his hand down a boy's trousers and fondle his genitals.

He found this pleasurable, soothing, and arousing, and this sometimes led to ejaculation. Bernard had spoken at length about the importance of having a relationship with his victims, and I tried to clarify this during one of our exchanges:

> BRENDAN: It sounds to me what you're saying is that the abuse was affection driven and not libido driven.
> BERNARD: I think it was driven by both. (Bernard, 2, 360–363)

Bernard stated that the abuse was driven partly by sexual motivation and not simply as a way to have an affectionate relationship with the victims.

Christopher, who abused a boy, and then later digitally adjusted images in a sexual way, said:

> I was feeling all the pressure, and the confusion, and everything that's happening in the work world, and the aggro. And then feeling comforted and somebody likes me, and this was wonderful. When I look at it, look back on it . . . I realise I had . . . almost like a sexual addiction going on in the background. (Christopher, 1, 910–915)

During the second interview that took place in October 2022, Christopher concluded that it was probably more accurate to describe his behaviour as sexual compulsion rather than as addiction.

Frank was able to speak clearly about the element of sexual pleasure:

> I wanted to touch them. I mean . . . I . . . had no real . . . attraction for the penis or for any flow. There was a pleasure, a physical sensation, pleasure out of touching them. (Frank, 1, 814–816)

Grant also spoke candidly about the development from horseplay to sexual arousal:

> And at that stage my reactions developed into . . . well, I suppose
> the best way to explain it is that I would get the person's arms that
> way . . . and force them to touch my penis. . . . And that gave me a
> sensation and at times I was aroused and that's where it really got
> out of control. (Grant, 1, 425–435)

Grant makes references to the behaviour "getting out of control," which
could refer to the difficulty of stopping a behaviour while in a state of
sexual arousal, or his general inability to desist from a behaviour that he
knew was wrong, and that he had tried to address—without success—with
priests or Superiors on a number of occasions.

Howard described the abuse (for which he was convicted of 11 accounts of
"indecent handling") as follows:

> I would touch him firstly through his pyjamas and then following
> that with, you know, putting my hand down the front of his
> pyjamas and touching his penis. And he would obviously get an
> erection as a result of that. (Howard, 2, 101–104)

Howard identifies the sexual element of the abuse in his account of his
understanding of what took place.

Edward said that he began the massage as a way of providing some
treatment to boys who had sports strains or injuries; but he recognised a
compulsive desire to help the boys. Later in life his sexual awareness
began to develop through meeting adult women and teaching girls in
senior school. He struggled to identify a sexual dimension to the behaviour
for which he was found guilty of abuse.

> I mean, obviously, it's sexual . . . but, but there was no further
> drive or no motive to have any further engagement with it. (Edward
> 2, 935–937)

He accepted that it was not necessary to require that the boys remove their underpants, and that he did massage close to the groin area. Towards the end of the interview, he found the suggestion that there was an element of sexual curiosity in his behaviour helpful.

> Part of the difficulty in talking with you . . . [is] we're probably finding little gaps in all my work with psychologists. . . . And I suppose I've not linked the sexual curiosity and the compulsion like as clearly ever before as I have today. (Edward, 2, 991–996)

When asked how it felt to make this connection, Edward said that there was a certain feeling of guilt, but also "relief in seeing the situation more clearly" (Edward 2, 1004). He later discussed this with his psychologist, as he found this a helpful way to look at his behaviour.

Dennis had difficulty when reflecting on the sexual dimension of the abuse. He said:

> I never felt excited or anything like that about it. It was almost as if it was just something mechanical that was gonna happen. (Dennis, 2, 517–518)

Dennis also acknowledged that this was a challenging area for him when he entered the therapeutic programme to address his behaviour:

> When I was in the . . . programme . . . I would say, "I need to understand and know why this happened. I don't know why this happened." And they . . . pushing this back to me saying I was in denial. . . . Maybe it is in denial, but I don't know why. I still don't know why. (Dennis, 2, 662–669)

Dennis struggled to return to the point of the abuse and to find words to explain his behaviour, particularly with regard to the sexual dimension of the abuse.

Table 6-21
Unmet Needs: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
3.1	Desire for touch/cuddling	A, B, F
3.2	Desire for affection/relationship	A, B, C, D, E, G
3.3	Desire for sexual contact/pleasure	A, B, C, F, G, H

6.4   The Process of the Abuse

In this section, findings will be presented about behaviours, thoughts, and feelings that relate to the actual incidents of abuse. These include comments that the victim took the initiative, though all of the participants acknowledged that they bear the responsibility for what took place. During the second interviews, the participants were asked explicitly about grooming. This section also includes reports from the participants that they did not feel able to stop their behaviour, despite knowing that what they were doing was wrong. This conflict is reflected in the uncomfortable feelings the participants spoke of. Three of the participants spoke about alcohol and how that was, or may have been, implicated in the abuse.

6.4.1 Victim Initiative/Grooming

Three of the participants said during the first set of interviews that part of the initiative on some occasions came from the victims themselves. Dennis, who knew he had initiated the contact, said he received confusing signals from his victims that he interpreted to mean that he could continue to behave as he was doing. During the second set of interviews that took

place two and half years after the initial interviews, the participants were asked if they had been involved in grooming their victims.

Andrew continually said that the students came to sit on his lap unbidden, but also said that one of the boys asked him not to touch him, indicating an awareness of what might take place. It is possible—if not likely—that the children had learned that Andrew liked them to come and sit on his lap. In this way he is able to distance himself from responsibility for some of his behaviour. When asked about this during the second set of interviews, he said, "When they came to sit on my lap it got to the stage where I tickled them . . . if or when they giggled or laughed, you know, then one goes a bit further" (Andrew 7, 37, 50–51). Bernard said, "And I could see how I had sexualised the relationship and that in actual fact I'd set the groundwork myself" (Bernard, 4, 20–21). He said that he learned about this in therapy and that it was an eye-opener for him. Likewise, Christopher, who said that the boy whom he had seen naked in the shower had come to his room, during the second set of interviews said, "I encouraged him to come to my room" (Christopher, 4, 5). Dennis and Howard were able to see that there was grooming involved after they did therapy:

> I can look back now and see why or how that clearly was somehow grooming that was going. I was obviously getting closer and closer to these boys, the relationship, but I didn't think it was grooming at the time. And it wouldn't have, it wouldn't have been grooming if I hadn't sexualised it. (Dennis, 4, 9–12)

> I made this kid . . . you know, [who] was a bit naughty at times, so I said, "Well, you need to move up closer to my room." . . . I was setting the situation, so grooming in that regard. (Howard, 4, 32–25)

Edward said that he invited boys whom he felt could benefit from massage. He said that some of the boys expressed gratitude for the massages that he gave them, and he took this as a signal that his behaviour

was appreciated. He said that he had no idea that what he was doing would be considered as sexual abuse.

The suggestion by some of the participants that the victim took some of the initiative can be seen as an attempt to endow the child with a capacity for adult decision-making in the area of sexual behaviour, which society and the Catholic Church do not accept. References to any initiative on the part of the child also suggest a certain passive involvement on the part of the person who abused and can be seen as an attempt to distance the person who abused from responsibility for the behaviour. During the second interviews, all bar one of the participants said that they had come to realise that they had indeed been involved in grooming their victims, and took responsibility for their behaviour, though one (Andrew) continually struggled to do so.

6.4.2 Not Being Able to Stop, Feeling Driven

"I couldn't help it" is a standard human excuse when a person has done something for which they are criticised, and they want to present a defence that they hope will be seen as credible. For some of the participants in this study a variation of "I couldn't help it" was that they felt driven or were not able to stop. Western society is familiar with addictive behaviour and crimes committed in the heat of passion. Such defences are often offered in mitigation of abusive or criminal behaviour.

Andrew said, "But I can't say why. Well, I couldn't have stopped it" (Andrew, 2, 385). In saying that he "couldn't" have stopped it Andrew is shifting responsibility to a part of his personality over which he claims he had no control.

Edward spoke about the compulsive dimension of his actions. He was able to tell himself that what he was doing was a way of caring for the students and helping them with sports injuries:

> Compulsive is probably the word. I'm wanting to treat 'em whether they wanted it or not. And then I'm probably compulsed to get 'em to remove part of their clothes but I'm not attracted to go any further than that. I'm not attracted to touch them or anything. (Edward, 2, 695–699)

Edward's explanation could be seen as a rationalisation of behaviour that some students found intrusive and abusive; but his own need meant that he was blind to their feelings or did not want to allow this information into his awareness as he did not want to stop.

Grant had made various attempts to talk about his problem, but never got a response that showed that others were taking his concerns seriously. This led to a feeling of frustration and an abandonment of desires to change his behaviour:

> I knew I needed to do something. Nothing was occurring, so to hell with it. (Grant, 2, 775–776)

Speaking about his internal conflict, which was described earlier, Howard reflected on the drive he experienced to seek sexual satisfaction in the way that he did:

> All of this was going on inside my head. But there was this drive to do it. (Howard, 2, 143–144)

This way of thinking and speaking—telling themselves that they did not have the ability to stop—also has the effect of minimising the emotional impact of the behaviours, to enable the abuse to continue under the guise of affection, or by putting some of the burden of responsibility on the perceived initiative of the students.

Edward and Howard shared about the compulsive element of their behaviour. For Edward, there was a compulsive desire to help the students, which deprived them of the freedom to refuse, including refusing to remove all their clothes. In Grant's case, he knew it was wrong and sought help. When no help was forthcoming, he felt frustrated and discouraged and the abuse was a way of dealing with his frustration and his feeling of not being listened to. The boys suffered due to the lack of response of those in positions of responsibility to whom Grant addressed his concerns about his behaviour. It was also a way for Grant to continue to experience pleasure and relief of stress.

6.4.3 "I Knew It Was Wrong"

While the participants found ways to distance themselves from understanding their behaviour as abuse, some also spoke of knowing that what they were doing was wrong:

Andrew, for example, said, "I knew it was wrong" (Andrew 1, 1127–1128), and Bernard similarly said, "I was aware at the time that it was the wrong thing to do; but, again, I used excuses not to be too hard on myself" (Bernard, 2, 28–29).

Dennis related the behaviour to his experiences of mutual masturbation in adolescence and spoke of a "clouded understanding:"

> There was a clouded understanding that it was the same as when I'd been growing up and we had mutual masturbation . . . when I was with my friends. . . . But I did know that it wasn't normal, it wasn't right. (Dennis, 2, 303–310)

Frank said straightforwardly, "I would've known it was wrong" (Frank, 1, 403–404), and Grant said that he also knew that his behaviour was not right:

> Probably the abuse would've taken place on the Saturday morning
> when I invited the child to come back and do some work at the
> school which we did. But then at the back of my mind I just kept
> thinking "I shouldn't be doing it," but I was. (Grant, 2, 721–724)

Howard was torn between his knowledge that his behaviour was wrong
and his desire to continue:

> And then the argument going on inside my head . . . "This is
> wrong. You shouldn't be doing it. You know, it's not the right
> thing to be doing to the kid." All of this was going on inside my
> head. But there was this drive to do it. (Howard, 2, 141–144)

6.4.4 Uncomfortable Feelings

The participants were aware of feelings of inner conflict and they spoke
about a range of uncomfortable feelings that they experienced as a result of
abusing the children.

Andrew was embarrassed when he ejaculated while wearing his soutane,
and he was sure that the boy had noticed. Bernard was extremely afraid
that anyone might come to know that he was gay. He was also aware of
possible damage to the children:

> You know, "is he gonna have terrible problems for the rest of his
> life?". . . Because . . . you'd heard about other people [talking]
> about when they were abused. But then when I saw his reaction
> was so friendly and what I picked up as loving. (Bernard 2, 258–
> 265)

Bernard interpreted the reaction of the student as "friendly," which made it
possible to tell himself that the student was not unhappy with this attention

and behaviour. It also enabled him to overcome concerns about the consequences of the abuse for his victims. Bernard also said he was "racked with guilt" after the first episode, asking "what have I done to him?" (Bernard, 2, 253–254).

Dennis was afraid that any other student might be aware of what he was doing:

> Sometimes I'd hear movement or something around . . .and then I'd leave his room straightaway. They weren't . . . individual sort of walls but no top on them. (Dennis, 2, 534-537).

In retrospect, what Dennis was doing was very risky, as sounds could easily carry from one student's area to another. The fear of being caught demonstrates an awareness that what he was doing was wrong and would be problematic for him in terms of his reputation among the students or if it became known publicly.

Frank also spoke about the fear of being caught:

> In my next school . . . I didn't have a dormitory, so it was more . . . grabbing hold of a chance. And at one—I remember at that school—was a once-off and would've been [a boy] who was in the dormitory sick and I walked through the dorm. It would've been only a couple of minutes. I would've been frightened to have done it longer. (Frank, 1, 878–882)

Frank was aware of the fear of being caught. Grant and Howard, as shown in the previous section, experienced internal conflict as a result of their behaviour.

The participants' managed their internal conflict through rationalisation of their behaviour, minimisation of the impact on the students, and selective interpretation of the response of the students. If the student did not

complain, appeared compliant or even friendly, feigned sleep, or did not overtly object, then this was interpreted as a sign that the student did not object to the behaviour and the abuse could continue.

6.4.5 Alcohol

Alcohol is often implicated in child sexual abuse. Wortley and Smallbone, for example, noted that "up to two-thirds of sexual offenders against children have serious problems with alcohol" (2006, p. 28). Three of the participants made reference to alcohol. Dennis said:

> So at that time I had found myself to be drinking very heavily. It gradually got worse and worse and worse as the year went on. Because I was basically overworked. I was burning out. Had the school all day, coordinating that. Then after school with kids, studies, dormitories, seven days a week. (Dennis, 2, 102–105)

> It [the abuse] was happening, you know, frequently each week to . . . the two. . . . Most nights, of course, I was well and truly blithered with alcohol. (Dennis, 2, 228–223)

Dennis was "self-medicating" with alcohol and using it to relax from overwork. Alcohol also functions as a disinhibitor, making it easier for the person to abuse, as his internal inhibitors (conscience, morality, fear of getting caught) have less influence on his behaviour. He said that a lot of the abuse took place when he was over-intoxicated, and that that has affected his memory of what took place.

Frank sensed that alcohol may have played a part in his abuse:

> And I'm beginning to think maybe not necessarily for the first time that some of the drink may have had some part to do with it, but

with the drink, and that workload, and other things are all in me

and I wouldn't necessarily rule out drink. (Frank, 2, 351–354)

Howard said that he usually had something to drink before he went to the dormitories:

It didn't happen every night, like, night after night after night; but it happened on occasions. I didn't need to have had alcohol or anything like that. But there was a drive to do it. (Howard, 2, 134–136)

Howard was aware that he had been drinking before the abuse took place; but he puts more emphasis on the drive inside him than the disinhibiting effects of alcohol.

Alcohol was a contributor to Dennis' abuse and may have had a facilitating effect for Frank and Howard.

Table 6-22
The Process of the Abuse: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
4.1	Victim initiative	A, B, C
4.1	Grooming	A, B, C, D, F, G, H
4.2	I couldn't stop/I felt driven	A, D, E, G, H
4.3	I knew it was wrong	A, B, C, D, F, G, H
4.4	Uncomfortable feelings	A, B, D, F, G, H
4.5	Alcohol	D, F, H.

6.5   Rationalisations and Exculpatory Narratives

Psychologists have studied various cognitive mechanisms used by abusers to justify, minimise, or excuse the abuse. These are often referred to as cognitive distortions. The participants explained the ways that these

cognitive strategies made it easier for them to initiate and continue the abuse, and then minimise their feelings of guilt about the abuse.

6.5.1 Exculpatory Narratives

Andrew said that at the time he did not see his behaviour as abuse. He said that this understanding came later, along with an understanding of the impact of the abuse on the students:

> But somewhere along the line . . . things would happen, like, going to [Renewal Programme], going to [therapy centre] and so on. It wasn't just putting a stop to it. I was getting an understanding. But it wasn't an understanding of how I was affecting those kids. That came later after I had stopped permanently. (Andrew 2, 761–766)

He said that "there was no oral sex," perhaps implying that since there was no oral sex that his behaviour did not reach the threshold for sexual abuse. This sense of defining his own limits with regard to what constituted abuse appears in this quotation:

> And the realisation, I think, that I was hurting kids by touching them. . . . I had never ever thought of going further, of raping a child. (Andrew 4, 364–366)

Andrew's use of language could also be a way of distancing himself from responsibility for his behaviour. In this quotation, for example, we can see Andrew's use of the word "apparently:"

> Now it was while I was there and perhaps it was the second year . . . but I apparently had touched one of the kids. (Andrew, 2, 181–182)

This way of using language has the subtle effect of denying or minimising responsibility or awareness of what had taken place, and/or may also manifest a certain discomfort with his actions.

The sense of not having crossed the line that would have constituted abuse is also present in Bernard's explanation:

> And so that took me a long while to say, "Oh yes, it was abuse . . ." 'cos I had in my mind that abuse was something that people didn't like. . . . It was, like, forced and . . . I didn't see my actions as abuse because . . . I didn't go as far as holding the penis or that . . . and therefore, in my mind, no, that was just affection. (Bernard, 1, 272–274, 840–845)

"That was just affection." Bernard may have found that redefining and minimising his behaviour in this way helped to persuade himself that his behaviour could be viewed as consistent with his Marist values. It also may have helped to protect him from the feelings of guilt and the negative judgment that would come from acknowledging abuse. Bernard could see in retrospect that this served a purpose for him:

> A lot of it was sort of saving myself from feeling bad and guilty about myself. (Bernard 2, 428–429)

Bernard's ability to tell himself that the boys did not complain about the sexual behaviour may have functioned as a way to protect himself from any negative emotional impact as a result of the abuse. It was a strategy that helped to prevent him from falling into the hole of negativity and self-loathing that he had described earlier in the interview.

When he reflected on the abuse and how he managed to continue this behaviour, Dennis said:

> I just found myself . . . feeling their genitals and fondling them and
> there was no objection from them. So from there it went to the
> point of me masturbating them and . . . .there was absolutely no
> sexual interaction between us. . . . There was no rape or buggery or
> anything like that. I didn't . . . masturbate myself with them.
> (Dennis, 2, 222–223, 230–232)

> I didn't threaten the boys at all or anything like that. There was no
> conversation that way with them. I don't know why I didn't feel
> that this was so wrong. (Dennis 2, 297–299)

Dennis' phrase "I just found myself" is another example of his use of
language that has the effect of distancing himself from responsibility for
the abuse and presenting himself as a passive actor in what unfolded.
Dennis has a list of behaviours that he would consider abuse, including
making threats, rape, or involving the boys in mutual masturbation, and
since he did not do any of these things, he was able to tell himself that
what he was doing was not abuse. He also said that he thought the boys
were asleep, otherwise he would never have approached them (Dennis, 3).
If the boys were unconscious, then he could tell himself that they had no
awareness of what was happening to them. While this would not exonerate
him from the behaviour, it could offer protection from any harm that might
ensue if the boys were aware of what was taking place.

Edward said that he did not realise that what he was doing could constitute
abuse: "I've put that down as abuse, but I wouldn't have realised" (Edward
1, 1058). Frank did not consider his behaviour as abuse as the boys did not
appear to reject what he was doing:

> Well, I didn't feel that I was abusing them because they didn't
> reject it. In a way I don't know whether they really felt it
> pleasurable like I did or not but for five or 10 minutes they
> would've stayed there while I did this. (Frank, 1, 914–916)

Howard also said that he thought his victim was asleep:

> Now all the time that this happened I believed that he was asleep. .
> . . But the reality is that he probably wasn't asleep. (Howard, 2,
> 104–109)

I have shown here how the participants had several ways that may have
helped them to distance themselves from responsibility for their actions:
minimising their actions; defining abuse to exclude their own behaviour;
using passive language where they did not present themselves as actors in
what unfolded, putting the responsibility onto the victims who may have
indicated that they either were open to the behaviour, or not indicating that
they wanted it to stop; and interpreting ambiguous behaviours in a way
that appeared to give permission for the abuse to continue.

Dr Gwen Adshead, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, described this kind
of rationalising as "exculpatory narratives." As part of an interview for the
BBC 4 programme *The Life Scientific* (26 February 2019),[67] She said, "If
you can convince yourself that what you are doing is not that bad, it is
easier for you to do it." By defining the abuse as a behaviour that was
more intrusive or violent than what they were doing, or by telling
themselves that the boys did not object or seemed to enjoy it, or were
asleep, the participants were able to create narratives that distanced
themselves from responsibility for their behaviour and enabled them to
continue to behave in this way.

Table 6-23
Rationalisations and Exculpatory Narratives: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
5.1	Minimisations and exculpatory narratives	All

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[67] See https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0002r3j.

6.6 Actual or Avoided Attempts to Seek Help

Andrew said that he tried to find help on a number of occasions, and also mentioned this in confession:

> So, it was like there were certain openings for help. Having got there the help wasn't there. And this happened on quite a few occasions. (Andrew, 1, 1478–1480)

> I came away from confessional at times saying, "I'm not sure that that priest can help me, or what he's saying to me is helpful." (Andrew, 1, 1484–1486)

Andrew had an opportunity for a sabbatical overseas and I asked if this was possibly a way to get out of his situation. He replied, "I didn't see it that way. It was help" (Andrew, 2, 644–648).

Christopher abused a boy in a boarding college when he was a postulant and entered the novitiate knowing that he had this secret. Christopher knew that he could have spoken about his abusive behaviour in the novitiate, but chose not to do so:

> And I had this secret side of me which I didn't wanna tell anyone about. . . . So that was, like, a conflicted part of me very much. (Christopher 1, 583–584)

It is likely that had Christopher shared this information in the novitiate that he would have been asked to leave the Brothers.

Dennis almost spoke about his abusive behaviour as part of a renewal programme when he was in Europe:

> I hadn't disclosed to anyone. I almost disclosed when I was at
> Second Novitiate . . . but I didn't. (Dennis, 2, 346–347)

It is unlikely that Dennis would have been asked to leave if he had shared about the abuse as part of the Second Novitiate programme; but he may have simply been too ashamed to be open about this part of his past, which would have taken considerable courage.

Grant mentioned the abuse to the Provincial once, as mentioned in Chapter 5. He said, "I wasn't listened to." Grant also spoke to a curate who told his parish priest; but again, nothing happened, leading him to feel frustrated. From his perspective, this lack of attention to his inner conflict made it harder for him to desist from the abuse.

Howard remembers reading a letter from the Provincial about the problem of sexual abuse in the Province (early-1980s), with an invitation to talk to a designated brother who had training to listen to brothers who might come forward:

> And he sent out a communication to all the Province at some stage
> during that. I remember reading it and it was exactly on this,
> "Brothers, this is one of the terrible things that's happening . . .
> with us. We need to make sure that we're doing the right thing
> here. And, you know, if anyone needs to talk then please contact
> myself or Brother [X]. . . . And I thought about it really strongly.
> Should I raise this with them? But I didn't. I didn't take it any
> further. (Howard, 2, 153–164)

Despite being confronted with his own behaviour through reading the Provincial's letter, with the name of a person with whom he could talk, Howard held back from taking his behaviour from the shadows and seeking help.

The failed efforts to seek help and the times when some participants considered seeking help but failed to do so demonstrates both their awareness that what they were doing was wrong and a desire to seek assistance. For some, the sought-after help did not materialise, leading to disappointment and a sense of being abandoned, and for the others it highlighted their fears and sense of shame at what they were doing.

Table 6-24
Seeking Help: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
6.1	Actual or avoided attempts to seek help	A, C, D, G, H.

6.7   Summary and Conclusion

This study's participants offered these explanations for their behaviour:

- Their need for affection
- The desire for sexual pleasure
- Grooming
- Their behaviour did not constitute abuse
- Not knowing how to stop
- Sex as a source of comfort.

By the time of the interviews, the participants were able to identify events in their lives that were factors in their abuse:

- Adverse childhood events
- Developmental factors
- Lack of sexual development and immaturity.

The participants spoke about a range of deficits that could have been influential in their choices:

- Lack of self-esteem
- Self-regulation difficulties
- Lack of normal sexual experience
- Lack of affection
- Poor boundaries.

The participants' changed self-awareness between the time of the abuse and the time of the interview could be traced through their ability to accept responsibility for their abusive behaviour, along with an understanding and acceptance that what they did constituted sexual abuse. There was also an awareness of the potential and/or real damage that they had done to their victims.

In Chapter 7, we will consider aspects of the Marist Brothers as a culture, system, and organisation that may have contributed to the abuse committed by the participants.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS:

THE MARIST BROTHERS AS AN

ORGANISATION, SYSTEM, AND CULTURE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the factors identified by the participants that related to the Marist Brothers as an organisation, system, and culture, and how that had an impact on the lives of the participants and the choices they made. Keenan noted that "the individual as a unit of analysis (2012, p. 713) is insufficient when considering the abuse of children by clergy." The individual's experience and understanding cannot adequately present the full range of factors that need to be accounted for when attempting to understand this complex phenomenon. The findings that relate to the context in which the abuse took place offer additional explanatory value when confronting this issue.

McGlone and Sperry (2012) offer a tripartite model to understand sexual abuse by clerics:

> Essentially it is the organization's culture, values, policies, and system of rewards and sanctions, in combination with the individual dynamics of the seminarian or priest, as well as situational factors, that best account for sexual misconduct among priests or manifestations of clericalism.

Along with the factors identified above, it is important to take account of environmental factors that were influential in shaping the context in which the participants abused children. Environmental factors relate to the Australian religious, educational, and social context where the participants grew up and developed as adults and Marist brothers.

This chapter will explore the following points:

- Situational factors

- The Marist Brothers as an organization

- Culture, systems, and abuse

- How the Marist organisation, system, and culture may have influenced the behaviour and choices of the participants

- Factors related to theology and spirituality

- Environmental factors.

7.1   Situational Factors

The situational approach to child abuse focuses on the immediate factors that may have facilitated the abuse. Access to victims is a critical piece of the complex narrative of abuse. In the United States the number of female victims increased after 1990 when girls were able to become altar servers, and priests had more contact with girls (John Jay, 2011, p. 100). The brothers, for the most part, taught in schools where the students were boys. The possible role of alcohol was discussed in Chapter 6. In this chapter I will focus on the situational factors that were identified by some of the participants:

- Boarding schools

- Conflict and stress

- Supervising boys in showers.

7.1.1 Boarding Colleges and Opportunity

The evidence from the Australian Royal Commission demonstrates that opportunity was a key factor in the abuse of boys. The participants worked with children in schools. It was noted in Chapter 3 that the clerical groups with the highest percentages of perpetrators had contact with children in schools, summer camps, and/or youth movements.

Bernard, Christopher, Dennis, Edward, Frank, and Howard worked in boarding schools where they worked "24/7, 365" (Dennis, 3, 49–50). Christopher described the situation as "horrendous," (Christopher, 3, 644) and asked if there was a correlation between the demands of work and the abuse that happened (Christopher, 3, 648). Goffman's (1961/1968) description of "total institutions" has been applied to boarding colleges, orphanages, and seminaries as the boys and young adults were resident in the place where they studied and played sports, and where they were living under a system of discipline and control, as well as religious belief that governed all aspects of their lives. "Total institutions" tend to be cut off from society and are often found in remote areas or have well-demarcated boundaries. The residents may require permission to leave the property.

The brothers taught in class, supervised the dormitories, coached sports, were often the point of contact for medical care, organised, and supervised activities, were responsible for discipline and pastoral care, and held various posts of responsibility. It was in some ways like a family, and the brothers acted *in loco parentis*, though this was also the space in which boundaries were necessary to ensure the safety of the children and the well-being of the brothers and the children, as the brothers had their own need for an adult life, with rest and renewal. Some aspects of the role may have been particularly difficult for brothers who were homosexual, especially dormitory and shower supervision, as they were supervising adolescent boys whose bodies were developing, at a time when these brothers may have been struggling with their own emotional and sexual needs and with issues related to sexual identity and orientation.

7.1.2 Conflict and Stress

Research has shown that stress can be a contributory factor to sexual abuse (Ward & Beech, 2006). Almost all the participants spoke about how stress or conflict had contributed to their emotional state in some way.

Bernard, for example, said:

> But another important reason was there were two brothers . . .
> working in the boarding school. . . . I found them very difficult, and
> they had the students after I'd had them. (Bernard, 2, 115–117)

Christopher spoke about his fear of conflict and Grant spoke about his fear
of confrontation and tension. These reveal a lack of skills to manage
conflict and difficult emotions. They made direct connections to the abuse.

> Then in the boarding situation . . . it turned out there were major
> conflicts between a couple of the younger brothers. . . . Brother [X]
> could be very volatile, and it was just a highly stressful work . . .
> and living situation. . . . And I look back on it now . . . I think, part
> of the reason . . . why . . . I abused. (Christopher, 1, 813–824)

He explained his later online sexual abuse in the same way:

> I run away from confrontation. And that was one of the ways I was
> coping with it. (Christopher, 2, 371–377)

Christopher was referring to digitally adjusting images of children. He was
found guilty of online abuse for which he served a prison sentence.

Dennis and Edward were also under significant stress, partly due to
overwork. Dennis spoke about a traumatic event in which one boy died
and another was seriously injured:

> In 1982 we had a major trauma at the school. . . . Some renovation
> was going on and a couple of the year 12 boys snuck in under the,
> what was the kitchen, had a fence around it and everything, to have
> a smoke. . . . And they lit the lighter to light their smoke and the
> whole place went up. Explosion. Massive. . . . The two of them
> were very, very, very badly burnt. One died as a result of it; but

the other was okay after about eight years of . . . . and psychotherapy and stuff, and burns, grafts and everything. But it was a massive trauma at the college. And I was one of the first on the scene with, with them. I heard the explosion. We were at mass in the church. I just ran out. (Dennis, 2, 61–79)

This event almost certainly had an impact on Dennis' ability to manage the stress he was experiencing.

Edward found the demands he experienced very stressful, and he compounded his problems by adopting the persona of a disciplinarian to avoid any suggestion of courting popularity. He said:

It's the whole culmination of that journey of stress and being asked to fill gaps and stretching myself beyond . . . where I could possibly manage. . . . You keep stretching a rubber band, it's gonna break. (Edward, 3, 725–728)

Frank said that he "struggled all his life with discipline" and he was relieved when he stopped teaching (Frank, 1, 317–318). Grant found adult relationships difficult, particularly when he was in a position of authority, as he was when he was the head teacher of primary schools. He concluded that this inner conflict contributed to the abuse:

And I think partly that by doing what I did it was a way of releasing the tensions that I had. (Grant, 1, 489–491)

Howard said:

I was not a happy person in the classroom. . . . I think I buried myself in activity. . . . A full-time teaching and administrative commitment during the day and coming home and then working at night. So I was grumpy. . . . I look back on those poor kids . . . and I don't think I was the best teacher that I could've been in those

days. And I think that was probably because of what was going internally as well and the fact that I wasn't dealing with that, and I was trying to block that out in so many ways that made me a less effective person in the classroom. (Howard, 2, 401–412)

Howard connects the internal conflict that he was experiencing as a result of his abusive behaviour, as well as being overworked, and how this had an impact on the quality of his teaching.

The John Jay report (2011, p. 120) mentions the contribution of conflict and stress to child abuse by clerics:

> Abuse is most likely to occur at times of stress, loneliness, and isolation. Such stressful or challenging situations triggered the desire in some priests to form inappropriate relationships with others—such relationships were most often with adults, but sometimes with minors.

7.1.3 Supervising Boys in Showers

Christopher first saw his victim naked in the shower, and Frank said that his abuse was "connected to seeing them naked in the showers" (Frank, 3, 7, 24). Howard also acknowledged that seeing these adolescents who were developing sexually in the showers was a source of difficulty for him:

> There was me trying to deal with being gay and coming to terms with my sexuality. And it was in my face every morning and every evening when I was supervising showers. (Howard, 2, 54–56)

Supervising was a place of vulnerability for the participants as the showers provided an opportunity for identifying possible victims for abuse.

Table 7-25
Situational Factors: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1	Boarding school as location of abuse	B, C, D, E, F, H.
2	Experience of conflict and/or stress	B, C, D, E, F, G, H.
3	Supervising boys in showers	C, F, H.

7.2   The Marist Brothers as an Organisation

The Marist Brothers were founded by St Marcellin Champagnat in La Valla, France, on 2 January 1817. By the time of his death there were over 250 brothers who taught in 53 schools. The Institute had a leadership and structure, a set of Rules (1837), and relationships with Church and civil authorities. The Marist Brothers received recognition in France in 1851 and Vatican approval in 1863. The Institute is led by a Superior General who is based in Rome, who governs with a Vicar General and six members of the General Council. The members of the General Council are elected at a General Chapter, with representatives from all administrative units of the Institute. General Chapters are held once every eight years. Before 1967, Provincials (local leaders) were appointed by the General Council. Since 1967, Provincials have been appointed after consultation with the members of the Province. The Provincial is obliged to consult the members of the Provincial Council, who are elected by the Provincial Chapter, regarding matters of mission and the lives of the brothers in the communities. Individual matters were often dealt with by Provincials personally, without consultation, although it is unlikely that a Provincial would handle such matters without consultation today.

There are approximately 2,400 brothers who are present in 79 countries.[68] The membership is divided into 28 administrative units, called Provinces

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[68] Marist Congregational website: https://champagnat.org/en/marist-institute/history-institute. Accessed 12 June 2024.

or Districts, each with its own leader and council. There is a process of formation for new members. Many brothers teach in schools, though some work in other apostolates. They are expected to live together in a community with a shared prayer life and community meals, with a local community leader who is responsible for the animation of the life of the community. Brothers give their income to the community and their personal needs, including health care, are looked after by the community. Opportunities are given for ongoing professional and spiritual formation.

The text that seeks to codify and articulate the aims, lifestyle, spirituality, and organisational structure of the Marist Brothers has been known as the *Rule* (1837), the *Common Rule* (1895) and the *Constitutions and Statutes* (1968) during the course of the Institute's history. The most recent version was prepared by the General Chapter of 2017, and, after being submitted to the Vatican for scrutiny and revision, was promulgated in June 2020. The Constitutions deal with the identity of the Marist Brothers: the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; community life; mission; formation and membership; and organisation and leadership. The Statutes (which relate to specific paragraphs in the Constitutions) deal with practical and specific matters related to levels of government, different levels of responsibility and authority, elections, financial matters, and dismissal. These two documents must be in accordance with the canon law of the Catholic Church.

7.2.1 Culture, Systems, and Abuse

There has been an awareness in recent years of the ways in which organisations, systems, and the culture of an organisation can facilitate abuse. Gerard Arbuckle, SM, a Marist Father, has written about the Church as an organisation, system, and culture, and how these factors were implicated in the abuse of children (Arbuckle, 2019). Arbuckle writes that culture arises out of a fundamental need for security, stability, and order, as culture tells us how to behave, what is and is not acceptable, what

values to hold, and how power is shared and organised. Culture provides a "pattern of meanings" (2019, p. 12) that is held together by a myth system that provides a set of significant stories, ideals, and values for the members of the group.

The Marist culture has distinctive features and members of different religious orders can have a sense of belonging no matter where they find themselves in the Institute, as certain understandings and practices are similar. An organisational consultant who worked with the Marist Brothers (2009–2017) said, "Wherever I go in the world the Marist reality is different, but the DNA is the same everywhere."[69] This observation relates to the culture of the organisation.

Pope Francis (20 August 2018) referred to "the culture of abuse" in his *Letter to the People of God.* The Australian Royal Commission and the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry reported on the cultures of abuse that were identified in Marist institutions. In Case Study 43 on abuse in the Maitland-Hamilton region in the 1960s and 1970s, the authors of the Australian report wrote about:

> The lack of any proportionality between the punishment and the supposed transgression. . . . The physical punishment was of such a kind to produce a culture of fear and intimidation of the students. (ARC, 2017, p. 148)

This observation does not relate to all Marist schools, nor, in relation to the school mentioned, during its complete history; but it does show that a culture that is abusive can develop despite the foundation myths, shared values, Common Rules, religious formation, and positive aspects of a religious culture.

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[69] Luca Olivari, Organisational Consultant. Private conversation.

7.2.2 The Marist Brothers as a "System"

Arbuckle (2019, p. 31) writes that "a culture is a 'social system,' that is, it contains many interrelated parts; touch one part and all other parts are affected." The "Marist system" is connected to the local bishop, and to the General Administration of the Marist Brothers in Rome. The Brothers cannot run schools without state authorisation, and in some countries the state (or local authority) will be responsible for paying the wages of the teachers and providing some or all of the costs of running the school. Brothers traditionally stayed in a position of responsibility for six years, and at the end of that time a replacement needed to be found, requiring changes of personnel. These are examples of how the system functioned.

When people write about "systemic" issues they are referring to aspects of a system that are intrinsic and often resistant to change, for example, the practice of covering up sexual abuse of children or of moving a brother who abused to another location. Similarly, the priorities of many Catholic institutions appeared to be the protection of the reputation of the religious order and the good name of the priest or brother who had abused, the protection of the assets of the order, and the silencing of the victim and his/her family in order to avoid scandal. These values were antithetical to the stated Marist value of care for children, and the requirement to support the statutory authorities when a crime had been committed. Arbuckle (2019, p. 27) writes that "corruption is systemic whenever it becomes an essential pattern in an institutional culture."

7.2.3 Policies and Abuse

Safeguarding protocols are a relatively recent innovation. Prior to that, as shown in Chapter 2, aspects of relationships with students were contained in the Common Rules. This was published with various revisions until the Common Rules of 1960, which had clear instructions about relations between brothers and students, including a prohibition against touching

students or using corporal punishment, the requirement for two brothers to provide supervision in each dormitory, and clarity about demarcating areas of the building where students were not permitted.

Despite these rules, cultures developed where traditions and practices did not always follow the regulations. There were also understandings about how a head teacher or Provincial should respond if there was an allegation of sexual abuse against a brother. In some circumstances nothing was done, some brothers were moved to other places, and from the 1970s onwards, they may have been sent for therapeutic help. There was no tradition of reporting a brother to the statutory authorities (though there were exceptions), and if this did happen, brothers were seldom dismissed.[70]

Bernard referred to this "system" when he noted that as a younger brother he knew, at the time when the abuse was taking place, that it was unlikely that he would be dismissed if allegations had been made against him.

7.2.4 The Marist Culture: A Contributory Factor?

Dennis reflected that he was valued for what he could do, but he did not

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[70] In Scotland, there were cases in the 1950s and 1960s in which a brother in temporary profession against whom there was an allegation of abuse did not renew his vows the following year, suggesting that the allegation of abuse resulted in his departure from the Institute. But there is no known case of a brother who was dismissed as a result of an allegation of abuse, although one made the decision to leave the Marist Institute after allegations of abuse in 1968. There is a similar example from Australia, recorded in the report of the Royal Commission, where Brother Stephen Farrell, an Edmund Rice Christian Brother who had not made final profession, was accused of abuse in Ballarat in 1974, which he admitted. The report notes that the Provincial was informed about the complaint and Brother Stephen "did not apply to renew his vows at the end of the year." (ARC, (2017), Vol. *16*, book 2, p. 574). In Ireland, according to the Ryan Report on the Christian Brothers (2009), "The dispensation procedure was often utilised in cases of suspected abuse. Where the authorities were satisfied that a particular individual had committed the acts complained of, he was encouraged to apply for dispensation instead of having to undergo the dismissal procedure" (Vol. *4*, chapter 6, p. 77). There is ample evidence, including from the participants in this research, however, that many clerics who abused children remained in their dioceses or religious orders and were protected. Keenan (2012, p. 189) reported a finding from the Ryan Report (2009, Vol. *3*, p. 23) that "laypeople who were discovered to have sexually abused children were reported to the police, but congregation members who were found to be abusing children were dealt with internally."

experience any sense of concern for him as a person or as a young man:

> I can pick out exactly the point, the matter, that right through from
> when I joined in the juniorate my experience was of the Marist
> Brothers being the same as Dad and the family, that there was no
> real affective embrace connection in the Brothers. It was, "You are
> a worker. And because you are a good worker you are doing God's
> work as a Marist brother." But there was never any outreach to me.
> It was only that I was valuable because of what I could do.
> (Dennis, 3, 500–492)

> That contributed to an ongoing series of events that resulted in me
> abusing. (Dennis, 3, 507)

Dennis also talked about the confusion in the Church and the Marist Order after Vatican II, and that those in positions of responsibility were "completely adrift." He said:

> I know that at the time I said, "I'm being trained by people who
> don't know how to train me." . . .They're completely out of their
> comfort zone. They've lost everything, everything that they ever
> knew. (Dennis, 3, 519–525)

It is worth noting that Dennis said that the way that he was treated in the Marist Order *contributed* to a series of events that *resulted* in his abuse of children. He was also critical of poor leadership after Vatican II. Dennis was able to reach this conclusion after time in therapy when he could reflect on his life and what he experienced and understood in retrospect.

Edward spoke about the impact of the Marist system on his life and his abuse. Referring to his psychologist he said:

> He said to me, "You know, you were abused too in a different
> way." But he said, like, "You've been abused, I mean by the

system." And I can understand where he's coming from. It's the whole culmination of that journey of stress and being asked to fill gaps and stretching myself beyond, beyond, beyond where I could possibly manage. (Edward, 3, 723–727)

The Marist system, to which Edward was being faithful, stretched him to breaking point and his psychologist wondered if the abuse that took place was partly a result of his own experience of being abused as a human being.

Dennis referred to ways in which the Marist Order had contributed to the situation in which he found himself:

And I know I've said this [on] a number of occasions in my therapy work, but I'm still annoyed, very annoyed that the Province, the Order, had not acknowledged to me and others the situation or contribution that for which they were responsible. (Dennis, 3, 500–503)

Frank, who enjoyed his years at the juniorate and his novitiate experience, said, "Looking back with my recent psychologist . . . I can see that I believe the Institute of Marist Brothers had some blame in me finishing up being an abuser" (Frank, 1, 613–615). He mentioned attending the juniorate at 12 years of age with no family holidays for five years, and the lack of age-appropriate sexual development. Edward said that the human formation was very limited (Edward 1, 608) and Grant said that they were treated like children and acted like children (Grant 2, 1024–1029).

Some of the participants had a sense of being let down or even abused by the system. I will return to these reflections in Chapter 9 when I discuss the issue of moral injury, and how this can offer a perspective that connects the experiences and suffering of the various actors in the child sexual abuse story.

The participants mentioned aspects of Marist formation and culture that impacted on their lives in ways that may have contributed to their abuse. These will be discussed in three sections:

1. Organisational factors
2. Spirituality and theology
3. Environmental factors.

7.3   Organisational Factors

The following factors were identified in the interviews with the participants. They will be discussed below:

- Attended juniorate
- Inadequate formation for religious life
- Inadequate formation for chastity
- Lack of adult relationships
- Marist work ethic
- Lack of professional preparation
- Poor leadership
- Protecting and moving abusers.

7.3.1 Juniorates

Up until the 1970s, boys between 12–18 years of age were recruited to attend juniorates if they expressed a desire to become Marist brothers. They were provided with secondary education and spiritual formation. The existence of these juniorates was accepted in the Catholic Church at that time. They were established and promoted to attract and nurture vocations, although André Lanfrey has shown that the expansion of the juniorate system did not necessarily correspond to an increase in membership of the Marist Brothers. He wrote, "While the number of juniors was to double between 1946 and 1957, the change in the number of temporary professed

brothers could hardly be noticed" (Lanfrey, 2016, Vol. *II*, p. 259*)*.

Frank was aware of the impact of the juniorate system on his own development:

> Looking back with my recent psychologist . . . I can see that I believe the Institute of Marist Brothers had some blame in me finishing up being an abuser.
>
> Number one, to take me from my home when I was 12, and people say, "Well, you went." Well, yes and no. How can a 12-year-old boy say you're not to go off? (Frank, 1, 612–615, 627–629)

He highlights aspects of his own development that were stunted or maldeveloped as a result of his entry to a juniorate at 12 years of age, and the absence of normal developmental opportunities.

Brother Peter Carroll, commenting on the early age of entry as part of his submission to the Australian Royal Commission, said that formation practices in earlier decades resulted "in a lot of people being very immature." Commenting specifically on taking boys in early adolescence to juniorates, he said that "it had an effect on their relationships, and I think it sort of caused dysfunction in their ability to relate to people" (ARC, Vol. *16*, 2, p. 775).

7.3.2 Formation

Dennis described formation as a "trauma" (Dennis, 1, 543). One of his formators said to him "Your job is when . . . I put you down . . . to get up and I'll keep putting you down and seeing if you get up. If you don't get up then you're not suitable to be a Marist brother" (Dennis, 1, 594–597). Edward found the novitiate a "wonderful experience" (Edward, 1, 353), but he had four novice masters, which he described as "botched" (Edward,

1, 439). He said there was some emphasis on prayer and work.

There is a clear generational difference, which reflects the changes in formation after Vatican II and better choice of formators. Bernard, Christopher, and Howard, who were trained in the 1970s and 1980s, had more positive experiences. This generational difference in experiences of religious formation was also reported in *The Cross of the Moment* (Jones et al., 2024, p. 78). Christopher described his novice master as "incredible" and enjoyed the routine and the courses, which he found inspirational. Howard enjoyed the courses and was given responsibilities. He enjoyed the friendship with other novices.

7.3.3 Formation for Chastity

The system of formation in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was done with little or no reference to sex and sexuality, or how to live celibate chastity. (The formation offered in the mid-1970s and 1980s was significantly different to what was available earlier, and this was commented on by the participants who did their novitiate in those years).

Grant said, "There was some emphasis on work, but when we came to sexuality basically, well, as the novices said, it was about the birds and the bees and flowers. And that's as far as it went" (Grant, 1, 195–197). Edward said, "I mean I had no understanding of celibacy" (Edward 5, 16). A Christian brother, reflecting on formation in his religious order, shared a similar story: "When I was in the novitiate . . . we were given a day on reproduction in lilies. That was neglect" (ARC, Vol. *16*, 2, p. 792).

Bernard said that there was one talk during the postulancy about masturbation, when it was referred to as "sins of the hand" (Bernard, 2, 661–669). While the positive dimensions of celibacy were presented well, practical aspects of living as a celibate man were not dealt with.

Christopher said that in his novitiate, practicalities "on the sexual side weren't talked about" (Christopher 2, 746). Reflecting on his, mostly positive, novitiate experience, Howard reflected:

> Did we have an understanding of what it was like to be a celibate person? I think the theories were there, you know . . . about . . . being totally given over to God and the mission of the Church and all that sort of stuff. . . . But did we ever have a lecture where we sat down, or a week of lectures where we sat down and talked about what it means to be gay or bisexual or heterosexual for that matter? (Howard 1, 599–605)

The participants spoke about the lack of preparation for the vow of chastity. Frank said:

> What I have discussed already was the lack of . . . sexual development, a place for it to happen and the actual development. Who knows how much better a person I would've been if I'd have had that? I don't know. But there was certainly something that was missing, and the Marist Brothers didn't provide it. In my going to a boarding school, I had to supervise boys naked in the showers. (Frank, 1, 629–635)

The Australian Royal Commission (Vol. *16*, 2, p. 792) summarised their findings as follows:

> There is wide agreement that the standard of formation that Catholic clergy and religious received in relation to living a life of celibate chastity was especially inadequate, at least before the 1970s. The Council (Truth, Justice and Healing Council) submitted to us that inadequate training and formation to prepare priests and religious to live celibate lives, rather than celibacy itself, "may have been a factor which contributed to the child abuse crisis."

Keenan criticised the teaching and expectations regarding celibacy. She said that the taboo around sex in general, with the secrecy around sexuality and sexual desires, created a climate where sexual feelings were a source of shame and embarrassment and there was no room for healthy conversation or acknowledgment of sexual desires. When the attitude to celibacy was combined with a Jansenistic theology that looked negatively on human nature and sexual sin in particular, a climate was created that made it difficult to develop a healthy adult attitude to sexual desire. She said that the formation system "stifled emotional growth" (2012, p. 162) and that the priests and brothers who emerged from these training houses were often "functionally immature men" (2012, p. 242).

7.3.4 Lack of Adult Relationships

The context of Marist religious life, living with other men and teaching boys, and working (especially in boarding colleges) every day of the week, did not make it easy to create spaces for normal adult relationships or friendships, and there was an absence of women in these men's lives.

Grant was aware of the absence of adult companionship, which partly led to him seeking the companionship of the young boys whom he invited to help him to do work in the school on Saturday mornings, some of whom he abused.

Edward spoke about the impact of the presence of adults, especially women, in his life when he did a renewal programme and then taught girls. He said of that time in his life, "There was certainly an awakening of the women, the sexuality with the women. I wouldn't say I was attracted to the boys" (Edward, 2, 689–691).

Keenan identified lack of intimacy in adult relationships as a key factor that contributed to abuse (2012, p. 94). Tom Doyle, a priest who is an advocate for victims of abuse, said in his testimony to the Australian Royal

Commission (Vol. *16*, 2, p. 756):

> The grounding for celibacy, the training, the nurturing, and the
> formation for celibacy has prevented men from maturing sexually,
> emotionally, psychologically in many ways so that, as one priest-
> psychologist said, what we have out there is the best-educated
> group of 14-year-olds in the country.

7.3.5 Marist Work Ethic

The participants joined the Marist Brothers, a teaching order for whom
"Love of Work" was a key value (Furet, 1989, pp. 415–425). For the most
part, the participants found their work rewarding. The importance of work
created a Marist culture that drove out almost everything else and where
other needs were not attended to. Regarding the rewards of work:

> It was stressful times too, but it was the type of work where you
> realised that sometimes you save kids from suicide and other things
> like that, so it was an incredibly rewarding time of life.
> (Christopher, 2, 27–30)

> It was very rewarding because I was doing stuff that was
> energising me. (Dennis, 3, 54–55)

> But being young, energetic, I loved it. . . .it was more, you know,
> living the rule. And . . . at the boarding school, a lot of those rules .
> . . went by the wayside because of the whole pressure of running a
> boarding school. But I loved it, and all the others loved it, and that
> was a good life for me. (Frank, 2, 292–299)

> They were great years, you know. I was working really hard.
> Mostly community life was good. . . . There [were] always issues
> of course; but, you know, mostly it was good. I was happy.
> (Howard, 1, 743–745)

While the work was mostly satisfying, and there were good community experiences, the participants had little time for rest, reading, personal enrichment, for their spiritual lives, or for friendships. Marist brothers, like priests, are not married and do not have children. There are always tasks that need to be done—especially in boarding colleges—and brothers with initiative will undertake projects that require more time and energy. Such commitment to work easily became a kind of drivenness, where other human needs were not taken care of, and there were constantly escalating expectations—particularly of those who were young and who had less experience of religious life and the requirements of the Marist apostolate.

Edward found himself stretched to do more and more work, as well as being asked to teach subjects he had not studied, or at a more advanced level, while taking sports, and dealing with the pressure of high expectations from students, staff, and former students. Edward also spoke about another brother who had a breakdown because he was stretched too much and could not cope.

The brothers were often thrown into situations with no preparation:

> I think the whole thing of how they used to just throw people into
> boarding schools and assume they're gonna cope . . . I think they've
> learnt that lesson or are aware of it now. . . . It was cannon fodder
> in those days. (Christopher, 2, 680–682)

> I went back and I was one page ahead of the kids. (Edward, 1, 895)

> I'm feeling less and less coping as a teacher. (Edward, 2, 319)

The participants were all affected by the Marist work ethic, which was passed on as a Marist value and tradition, as the Founder wanted the brothers to have a love of work. Sadly, this became a kind of drivenness where more and more work was expected of the brothers, with little or no time for rest. The Australian Royal Commission noted that "overwork may have contributed to their abusive behaviour" (Vol. 16, 2, p. 820).

7.3.6 Lack of Professional Formation and Preparation

Two of the participants explicitly mentioned being asked to do jobs for which they were not prepared. Christopher said:

> I got thrown into other areas, like, I was originally trained [for] middle school which was upper primary/junior/secondary. And then I end up doing all senior schools. So I've always been, particularly the last part, in situations where all my school set and everything I've had to relearn. (Christopher, 3, 673–677)

He said that there was an assumption that once you were in a school you could cope with anything. Edward's experience of being asked to teach subjects he had not studied has already been mentioned. He also reflected on being pushed to undertake a two-year academic course in teacher training in one year. Reflecting on his experience, he added, "I was asked to teach lower secondary which was totally foreign to me" (Edward 1, 799–800). The cumulative effect of responding to appointments for which he was not trained, along with sports, administrative, and boarding duties, stretched him beyond his abilities and capacity.

The Australian Royal Commission criticised the practice of requiring members of religious orders to take on responsibilities for which they had not been trained (ARC, Vol. *16*, 2, pp. 779–780). As well as being unprofessional, this contributed to a poor sense of self-worth and lack of competence among the members of religious orders, and it left many

feeling anxious and inadequate.[71]

7.3.7 Poor Leadership

Brother Philip Pinto, CFC, former Congregational Leader of the Christian Brothers (2002–2014), reflecting on the exercise of leadership in his own order, said to a gathering of Marist Provincials in 2013, "Leadership treated the membership with disregard." He then added, "And that led to abuse."[72]

Andrew said that he experienced a number of Provincials who did not want to know anything about his abuse of children. He said, "I had some magnificent people, but it must've been ages before . . . they bloody listened to me" (Andrew, 1, 1499–1500). Christopher felt that having lots of boarding schools was a failure of leadership. He said, "The brothers became boarding school fodder" (Christopher, 4, p. 8, 7-8). Dennis had poor experiences of formators, reflecting that "I'm being trained by people who don't know how to train me" (Dennis, 3, 518–519). He also worked under a couple of "dictatorial" headteachers, and at least one Provincial who had an authoritarian approach.

It appears that some Provincials avoided problems. Bernard said:

> And the attitude, whether it was sexual abuse, or alcoholism, or violence, or whatever, it was never treated. It was not only ignored at times, but it was, "Well, don't do it again." (Bernard, 3, 660–661)

Some brothers were moved, making use of what is euphemistically called,

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[71] I remember talking to elder French Marist brothers in the south of France in 2004 who told me that they were sent to teach after the novitiate without any formal training, and had the experience of seeing their own former students returning to the school after appropriate professional training and joining them as members of staff.

[72] Pinto, Philip, CFC. (September, 2013). Marist General Conference, L'Hermitage, St Chamond, France.

"the geographic cure:"

> Avoid. Brothers who were regularly moved because of complaints.
> . . . The drastic step of removing them from ministry was never
> taken. (Bernard 3, 672–674)

Andrew said he was asked to replace a brother on one occasion who was
being moved due to sexual abuse of children (Andrew 2, 227–230), and
Frank reflected on his own experience of being moved after he had abused:

> When I did abuse, I was moved from one place to another. That's
> the story of the Catholic Church in a way. (Frank, 1, 642–645)

Andrew, Bernard, Christopher, Frank, Grant, and Howard all had the
experience of being returned to ministry after allegations of abuse. As far
as I know, and based on their self-reports, no one who had been for
therapy after discovery and imprisonment abused afterwards. Those who
were moved without therapy sometimes did abuse again. Marie Keenan
(2012, p. 174) found the same pattern in her research, as she noted that "to
the best of my knowledge, none of the men who participated in this
research has ever abused a minor since participating in treatment."

7.3.8 Nothing Happened to Perpetrators

Andrew, Bernard, and Frank said that the only consequences they had seen
for brothers who had abused children was a transfer to another community:

> But the monk himself stayed and then he got shifted. So, I was able
> to carry on. I always knew that something happened, that a monk
> got removed or something like that. (Andrew, 1, 1341–1344)

> There was an attitude . . . that "Oh well, they won't accuse a
> brother. They might complain about a brother or priest, but it

would never go to the police 'cos they're held in so much respect."

(Bernard, 3, 644–647)

The various criticisms of leadership reflect a Marist culture where leaders had significant authority and power over the lives of individuals, but where decisions were sometimes made that did not respect the needs and preferences of the individuals concerned. Members of the Order could see that problems were often avoided, abusers were moved and not disciplined or dismissed, and problems were seldom discussed openly.

The Australian Royal Commission revealed patterns of leadership that concentrated too much power in the hands of bishops or congregational leaders, with a lack of transparency or accountability. There was a lack of checks and balances. Leaders tended to deal with challenging situations internally. Protection of finance, the avoidance of scandal, care and protection of members in final profession, and the reputation of the order were significant values. Some religious orders were "closed institutions:" (Vol. *16*, 2, p. 654) which avoided external scrutiny as far as possible. The commission concluded that these unhealthy aspects of leadership, along with limited oversight from Provincial Councils, "may have contributed to the problem of sexual abuse" (p. 654).

Table 7-26
Factors Related to the Marist Organisation and Culture: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1	Attended juniorate	A, D, E, F, G.
2	Poor formation for religious life	A, D, E, F, G.
3	Inadequate formation for chastity	All
4	Lack of adult relationships	B, C, E, G.
5	Marist work ethic	C, D, E, F, H.
6	Lack of professional training and preparation	A, C, E.
7	Poor leadership	A, B, D, E, G
8	Awareness that abusers would not be dismissed	A, B, G, F.

7.4   Factors Related to Spirituality and Theology

Researchers have identified a range of factors related to the Church's theology and spiritualities that may have contributed to abuse in the Church. The following factors related to unhealthy spirituality and theology emerged from the interviews:

- Perfectionism
- Obedience
- Masturbation and mortal sin
- Homosexuality.

7.4.1 Perfectionism

The spiritual value of striving for perfection was part of Marist formation and the culture of religious life before the renewal brought about by Vatican II. Keenan came to the conclusion that the men who abused in her study were perfectionists (2012, p. 246), but that they could not live the perfection they aspired to. Three of the participants in this study spoke about perfectionism in different ways:

> I yearned for a close relationship with Dad but nothing I did was ever good enough. (Dennis, 1, 69–71)

> I still fit in my prayers, fit in the office, kept at it. . . . I'm still . . . I'm always going to be one for whom near enough is never good enough. (Dennis, 3, 357–358)

> Trying to be as good as I could at sport and be as holy as I could. . . . However, there was all this anxiety about "was I good enough to be a brother?" (Edward, 1, 432–433)

> And, like, I can remember him saying in one of his Provincial's

addresses to us during a retreat that the sentence that shaped my life for the worst, that a brother's popularity is in inverse proportion to his efficiency. . . . And I never ever set out to be unpopular but I set out to be efficient . . . I mean I was efficient, but I had to become more efficient. (Edward, 1, 926–928)

If I could be the best principal, if I could be the best schoolteacher, if I could be the best president that the Principals' Association ever had, then I would get recognition and it would make all that other stuff that I know about that people don't know about go away or . . . fade into insignificance. I'm not talking about the offending there. I'm talking about the disgust that I had for myself as a gay person. (Howard, 3, 85–90)

Dennis understood his drivenness and perfectionism as an attempt to impress and please his father. He wanted to develop a relationship with him where there was some experience of affection. He believed that he had similar experiences of never being good enough with brothers in positions of authority who often treated him in the same way. Edward internalised a remark by a Provincial about not forfeiting efficiency for popularity and strived throughout his life to fulfil the expectations of being a good Marist brother. His experience is probably closest to the kind of perfectionism identified by Marie Keenan. Fortunately, he was able to let go of this expectation in mid-life as a result of opportunities for spiritual renewal. Howard explained his aspiration to be the best principal etc., to compensate for his sense of shame and disgust at being gay. It may also have been a reflection of personal ambition. He was able to let go of this when he worked on personal and sexual issues in therapy.

A strong work ethic is not the same as perfectionism in a spiritual and moral sense. Marist brothers who were formed in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were fed a diet of piety and devotionality, based on an ascetical theology that elevated perfectionism into a rule of life (Prendergast, 2021, pp. 207–222; Lanfrey, 2016, p. 318). The perfectionist ideal that was part

of religious life and Catholic spirituality at that time did not make everyone formed in this era a child abuser. Having said that, the men in this study endeavoured to live their religious lives and to undertake their professional duties as well as they could, and this added to the pressures that affected their lives.

7.4.2 Obedience

The five brothers who spoke about obedience were formed before the reforms of the Second Vatican Council had an impact on Marist formation in Australia. Regarding obedience, Andrew said, "You'd do what you were told. Obedience was everything" (Andrew, 2, 46). Dennis spoke about brothers who were his formators or superiors for whom doing what you were told was a key value. Edward, reflecting on a pivotal moment in his life, said:

> It became clear to me that . . . one of the biggest growth experiences for me was in 1976 at (a renewal programme) when I said, "No." (Edward, 4, 4–7)

When asked what kept him in leadership positions when he felt so stressed, Grant replied, "Well, a brother who's obedient" (Grant, 1, 936).

Obedience was one of the three vows taken by members of religious orders and was an important value in the Marist Institute. Christopher and Dennis did not want to go to (or return to) a boarding school, but did so out of a spirit of obedience, with tragic consequences as they both abused in boarding situations. "Obedience" comes from the Latin verb "audire," which means "to listen." Sadly, members of religious orders often did not feel that they were listened to. Andrew and Grant were not listened to when they asked for help for their abusive behaviour, and they felt discouraged.

Another aspect of the culture of obedience and the lack of space for personal autonomy and decision-making was the experience of institutionalised immaturity as a result of the infantilisation of adult men. Grant said, "We were treated as little children" (Grant, 2, 1024), and Edward reflected on some child-like behaviour of the young men with whom he lived scholastically that they did to let off steam in a harmless but childish way (Edward 5, 645–663).

The Ryan Report (2009, 4, 6. 123) into abuse of children in Irish boarding institutions noted that "the vow of obedience made it difficult for these brothers to raise their disquiet. Junior brothers were in awe of their seniors in the community." Keenan (2012, p. 224) concluded that "the role of obedience in the current crisis of child sexual abuse hitting the Catholic Church cannot be underestimated." The abuse of authority and obedience was also reported in *The Cross of the Moment* (Jones et al., 2024, pp. 70–76).

7.4.3 Masturbation and Mortal Sin

Masturbation is a statistically normal part of adolescence and recent research has shown that it is part of adult experience for many men and women (Huang, Niu and Santtila, 2022). However, within the Catholic Church it was treated as a mortal sin, and young men in formation houses, in dioceses, and in religious orders had deep feelings of guilt and shame about this practice. It is only in recent years that this sensitive pastoral issue has been taken out of the shadows and can be talked about in an adult way (Kraft, 1982).

The participants spoke about masturbation in adolescence and in their adult lives as Marist brothers. Three of the participants shared about experiences of mutual masturbation with other boys as part of adolescence, and seven mentioned masturbation as part of their lives as brothers. Bernard said, "Masturbation was a daily part of my life, I suppose"

(Bernard 1). Howard remembers the teaching of his novice master:

> "If you're still masturbating at the age of 25 then there's something
> significantly wrong with you." I thought, "My God, really?" you
> know (laughs). . . . Yeah, they were the days. (Howard, 1, 557–
> 560)

The teaching on masturbation was focused on restraint and moral
judgment, with the assumption that it was part of adolescence and not
adult life. Dennis and Edward spoke about their deep sense of sinfulness
connected to masturbation and talking about this in confession:

> Even my own personal masturbation was, I knew, it was sinful, and
> I kept confessing it but it was . . . I still continued. I persisted with
> the release. With the consolation. Yeah, something for me, that was
> coming back to me. (Dennis, 1, 301–304)

> So I can remember a couple of times asking to see the
> extraordinary confessor.[73] It was huge guilt. (Edward, 1, 560–561)

Frank reflected on how his life has changed in recent years, in comparison
with the way he thought as a young man:

> And that doesn't impact on me now. I know forgiveness and who
> God is, who I am, and the wonderful life. All of this has swamped
> what was that awful dichotomy of mortal sin. (Frank, 1, 205–207)

Keenan concluded that for the men in her study sex was "dirty and sinful"
(Keenan, 2012, p. 135). They tried to become sexless persons. These
sexual desires and drives, deeply imbued with feelings of shame and illicit

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[73] Members of religious orders were encouraged to make use of the Sacrament of
Reconciliation, commonly known as "Confession," ordinarily on a weekly basis. During
retreats and on other occasions there would be an opportunity to go to confession to a
priest who was not part of their daily life. In that sense these priests were known as
"extraordinary" confessors, i.e., confessors who were not part of their ordinary lives.

pleasure, emerged unhealthily in the abuse of children. The brothers in this study accepted the Church's teaching regarding masturbation, but continued to make use of masturbation as an outlet for stress and their sexual desires.

7.4.4 Homosexuality

Bernard, Dennis, and Howard identified as homosexual and Grant said he found young men in the 18–20 age range attractive (Grant, 1, 766, 794). Bernard and Howard felt deeply ashamed of their orientation (Bernard, 1, 300–303) and they were terrified that anyone would discover that they were gay (Howard 1, 106–109). The available data suggest that between 50%–83% of clergy who have abused children have self-identified, or can be identified with some confidence, as homosexual or bisexual (see: Table 7–27, footnote 7, and discussion of the German data). This raises the question of the role of homosexual orientation in child abuse by priests and brothers.

The participants grew up in a Church and societal culture that pathologised homosexuality. The Church promoted family values and much of Australian society was homophobic. The Australian House of Representatives passed a motion to decriminalise homosexual behaviour in October 1975 by 64 votes to 40. However, the process of changing the law in the Australian states and territories was not completed until 1997, showing the resistance and hostility to supporting the rights of homosexual persons.

Moore (1989) analysed carefully the language used by the Vatican regarding homosexuality, showing that the *Declaration on Sexual Ethics* (1975) describes homosexual orientation as "incurable," and the result of an "innate instinct or a pathological constitution." Such language pathologises individuals with a same-sex attraction who are seen as "sick." According to Cardinal Ratzinger's *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual People* (1986), the

homosexual "condition" is not to be judged from a moral perspective, but any behaviour that results from homosexual desires is to be regarded as an "intrinsic moral evil." Moore, reflecting on the Vatican's teaching and language, concluded that "it is not surprising that people in that condition sometimes end up frightened, miserable, and bitter, and that some even kill themselves. But to repeat, what they are suffering from is not homosexuality, but inhumanity" (1989, p. 19). The homosexual brothers in the study lived their Marist lives at a time when these teachings were dominant and normative in the Church and when homosexuals did not have any visibility or acceptance in Australian society.

Societal attitudes and laws began to change in the 1960s; but the Church held steadfastly to a stance which rejected homosexual behaviour while slowly moving to a more pastoral stance towards homosexual persons, especially during the papacy of Pope Francis (elected in 2013).

The German (2019) and French (2021) reports provide data on the sexual orientation of those who abused. The qualitative studies that exist also provide data. (Table 7-27).

Table 7-27
Number of Homosexual Participants in Studies of Clerics who Abused Children.

Study	# participants	# homosexual	#bisexual	% homo/bisexual
Keenan	9	6		66.6%
Winship	12	5 (footnote 75)	1	50%
Tourangeau diocesan priests	10	5		50%
Tourangeau religious	10	8		80%
German report	50	36	4	80%
CIASE (France)	35	16	10	83%
Geary	8	4		50%

Keenan reports that six of the nine men in her study identified as homosexual (2012, p. 142). Winship, in her short descriptions of the participants in her study of 12 priests and brothers who abused children (2011, pp. 81–84), indicates that five out of 12 reported an attraction to adult men, and one reported an attraction to men and women. Tourangeau interviewed 10 members of religious orders who abused children and 10 diocesan priests who abused children. He reported that 80% of the members of religious orders and 50% of the diocesan priests who were offenders of public record identified as homosexual. By comparison, 50% of the religious who were non-offenders and 40% of the diocesan priests who were non-offenders in Tourangeau's study identified as homosexual (2017, pp. 62–64). The German researchers undertook interviews with 50 priests who were guilty of child sexual abuse. They explained their methodology in their report:

> Against the background of the interviews, 10 of the 50 accused can be described as (probably) heterosexual, 36 as (probably) homosexual and four as (probably) bisexual, whereby this assessment is based on descriptions of previous offences and previous as well as current fantasies, since the interviewed accused were generally not sexually active at the time of the interview. (Kruse, et al. (2020); MHG Study, Sub-Project 2, p. 111)

The German report is cautious about ascribing sexual orientation, as indicated by their repeated use of "probably." The combination of description of previous offences along with sexual fantasies gives a reasonable basis for the conclusions that they reached. This data suggests that 72% of those who were accused of abuse were homosexual in orientation and that 8% were bisexual.

The French (CIASE) Report interviewed 30 priests who had abused children. The abuses took place between 1950 and the date of the research (2018). A total of 53.3% of sex offenders of minors declared themselves to

be homosexual and 30% of assailants against minors identified as bisexual. (The report is not clear regarding the distinction between aggressors and assailants). This suggests a total of 83% who were homosexual or bisexual in orientation. The CIASE Report indicates that the percentage of homosexual abusers reached 83% "among those who exclusively assaulted male minors" (Thibault, CIASE, Appendix 30, p. 19). None of the abusers whose victims were girls identified as homosexual. Thibault concludes that "their declared sexual orientation therefore suggests that the choice of underage victims is directly linked to homo or heterosexual orientation, rather than the opportunity to meet a male or female victim" (Thibault, p. 19).

Three of the eight participants in this study reported a homosexual orientation and one (Grant) reported an awareness of attraction to young adult men after the experience of discovery, imprisonment, and therapy. This data is far from conclusive, but suggests that between 50%–80% of priests and religious who abused children may be homosexual or bisexual in orientation.[74]

The majority of incidences of abuse that have been analysed by commissions of inquiry, including the CIASE Report, which identified orientation as a factor in the abuse, and in the qualitative reports discussed in this dissertation, took place between 1950–2000, when the Vatican's teaching on homosexuality reflected the view that homosexual orientation was an illness and something which is "suffered" (Moore, 1989, p. 17). The John Jay Report notes that there was an increase in the number of homosexual men in American seminaries in the 1970s and 1980s (or men

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[74] I was able to ask the participants directly about sexual orientation. It appears that Keenan and Tourangeau took a similar approach. Consistent with her psychoanalytic perspective, Winship is more nuanced about indicating sexual orientation as she explored aspects of sexuality and sexual orientation with the participants in her study. She demonstrates the complexity and ambiguity of human sexuality, sexual orientation, and the range of ways that the participants in her study behaved sexually and tried to understand sexual desire and orientation in their lives. It was necessary to examine her dissertation carefully to elicit how many of her participants may have identified themselves as men who had a same-sex attraction to adult men. The authors of the German report explained their methodology which has been quoted in the text of this dissertation. They included bisexuality as an orientation.

who self-identified as homosexual), but that the incidence of abuse shows a marked decrease from the mid-1980s onwards. Those who were ordained after 1989 represent only 1.9% of those against whom there are allegations of abuse (John Jay, 2011, p. 38). This data suggests that it is necessary to look for factors other than sexual orientation to understand what led to the sexual abuse of children. If there was a direct or indirect correlation between homosexual orientation and abuse, it would be reasonable to expect to find more cases after 2000, rather than the decline which is found after 1980. It is important to remember that this data comes from the United States. However, it is possible to compare this data with the situation in Australia as the legal and social status of homosexual people was similar in the developed world during that time period. It is also important to bear in mind that it is nowhere suggested that heterosexual orientation is a factor in the abuse of girls.

Official reports and research studies mostly come to the same conclusion. Homosexual orientation in itself is not a factor in the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests and brothers. However, the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality, which it describes as "intrinsically disordered" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2357), the enforced dishonesty around homosexual orientation, with the feelings of fear (Bernard), shame (Howard), and sometimes self-loathing (Howard) may have been influential contributory factors in their abuse of boys.

Table 7-28
Formation, Spirituality, and Theology: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who spoke about this factor
1	Perfectionism	D, E, H.
2	Obedience	A, B, D, E, G.
3	Masturbation and Mortal Sin	B, D, E, H.
4	Homosexuality	B, D, G, H.

7.5   Environmental Factors

The Marist Brothers did not exist in isolation, but were influenced by the values, assumptions, and practices that could be seen in the Australian Catholic Church and society. Bernard, for example, was aware that homophobic attitudes were part of Australian society as well as the Catholic Church. He said:

> There was never any message from . . . the Master of Novices that gay people can't be brothers. But it was my belief from all the things I'd heard in society and in the Church. (Bernard, 4, p. 2, 47–50)

Howard was also aware that the attitude towards gay people in the Church was simply a reflection of the prevailing attitude in Australian society at that time. The sense of shame, fear, and inner conflict that they internalised from Australian society and the Church when they were growing up had an influence on their development and lack of freedom to engage in age-appropriate sexual experimentation without shame and guilt.

Bernard's and Frank's comments about the culture of impunity that protected priests and brothers have already been mentioned. Christopher gave examples of knowledge of sexual abuse in previous generations, where nothing happened in response, and how Australian society was very rigid and closed in many ways:

> You had a very conservative society. . . . And you also had a very strict parish structure. . . . If you were seen talking with the girls going down to the Church, you were in trouble. (Christopher 3, 602–622)

Referring to the culture of avoidance when dealing with issues of sexuality, Christopher said:

> I look back to Dad's period and everything, where I'm sure stuff
> went on, but they never talked about it. (Christopher, 3, 585–587)

The Church's theology regarding sexuality found an echo in societal attitudes. The taboo about sexuality in the Church was also found in and reinforced by Australian society. Church leaders tended to avoid problems, or, when they were dealt with, cloaked them in confidentiality and avoidance of conversation.

Table 7-29
Environmental Factors: Summary.

	Factors	Participants who mentioned this factor
1	Environmental Factors	B, C, F, H.

7.6   Summary and Conclusion

At the time of the interviews, the participants identified situational factors that may have contributed to the abuse:

- Boarding schools
- Conflict and stress
- Supervising showers.

Some of the participants spoke about the impact of the Marist system, in the follows ways:

- Attended juniorate
- Poor formation
- Inadequate formation for chastity
- Lack of adult relationships
- Marist work ethic

- Lack of professional preparation
- Poor leadership
- Protecting and moving abusers.

Aspects of spirituality and theology were identified that created an unhealthy culture that led to overwork, lack of recognition of the reality of human weakness and fallibility, and a culture of guilt and shame around aspects of sexual development and self-acceptance, all of which led to psychosexual and adult underdevelopment.

- Perfectionism
- Obedience
- Masturbation and mortal sin
- Homosexuality.

Two of the participants spoke about being abused by the system, and how counselling helped to raise their awareness of these factors. As already mentioned, this will be discussed in Chapter 9 from the perspective of moral injury.

Some of the participants identified aspects of Australian society which created an environment which was not helpful for their development, and which reinforced unhealthy aspects of Catholic and Marist life.

CHAPTER 8

READING THE FINDINGS

THROUGH THE LENS OF

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Qualitative research seeks a deeper understanding of the meanings of situations, and psychological research has developed ways of exploring, analysing, and providing models for understanding of human experience. The knowledge that emerges from psychological research continually evolves, building on previous research. Whatever conclusions that are offered are provisional (Chapter 4), expanding and deepening our understanding of particular aspects of human experience. Psychology can be regarded as the "handmaid" of Practical Theology, as psychological research offers a resource of knowledge, analysis, and methodologies that can elucidate, ask critical questions, and provide context and support for issues that are being reflected on theologically.

In this chapter I will review the findings in the light of psychological research that is related to the themes of identity, belonging, and loss, which were presented in Chapter 5, and on current psychological understandings of the aetiology of child sexual abuse, which relate to the findings presented in Chapter 6. The following four significant topics will be discussed in this chapter:

1. Attachment
2. Intimacy deficits and loneliness
3. Emotion regulation
4. Guilt and shame.

I will then review four qualitative studies of priests and brothers who have abused children, in the light of the findings:

1. G.T. Faulkner: The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers Report (April 1998)
2. Marie Keenan (2012)
3. Jacqui Winship (2012)
4. John Michael Tourangeau (2017).

The Christian Brothers' Report (1998) and the three studies mentioned above provide data that can be compared with the findings. These four studies have significant points of convergence that can be compared with the findings from this study. Keenan identified clerical celibacy and the theology of ontological change as significant factors in the aetiology of abuse by clergy. These two factors will be discussed when reviewing her work.

Comparison with these studies makes it possible to engage with previous findings as part of the search for greater insight and understanding, and to view the phenomenon of the sexual abuse of children (boys) by brothers (and other clerics) from different perspectives. This study has reflected on the findings from the perspective of brotherhood and the history of the care and protection of children in the tradition of the Marist Brothers, which was not part of the analysis offered in the four studies mentioned above. I will discuss the use of the word "cursed" in the title of Winship's dissertation, and its implications for the men who offended, and the decision to choose "broken brotherhood" as the title for this dissertation.

I will share the findings in relation to the role of "sense-making" processes, making use of Tourangeau's research (2017), including the place of prayer and spirituality in the lives of the participants. The chapter concludes by exploring the ways that the participants made efforts to create new identities, including service of others and a renewed spirituality, and to rebuild their lives, without negating or denying their abusive behaviour

8.1   Psychological Themes

8.1.1 Role, Identity, and Belonging

Being a Marist brother provided a clear identity for the participants. While Marist brothers maintained family links and may have maintained or established a group of friends who were not brothers, most of the people with whom they related would have been Marist brothers. Stets and Burke (2003, p. 135) wrote that "the greater the number of persons to whom one is connected through having a particular identity, the greater is the commitment to that identity."

When people acquire identities, they demonstrate an interest and desire to follow a particular set of roles and values. Their Marist identity enabled the participants to fit into the Marist Provinces, communities, and schools they belonged to. According to Ryan and Deci (2003, p. 254) "the principal function of identity formation is fostering the experience of secure belongingness or relatedness." Roles imply boundaries, as they clarify the tasks and responsibilities that a person is expected to fulfil, while setting limits to behaviours, degrees of familiarity, intimacy, and contact that are expected or acceptable within a relationship. The abuse of children broke those boundaries with profound consequences for the victims, the men who abused, the families of the victims, school communities, and the Marist Brothers as individuals and as a religious institute.

Reflecting on the experience of discovery, the participants said that they felt "panic" and "anxiety" (Bernard, 2, 796–798,), "the end of the world' (Christopher, 1, 1241), "in an absolute state" (Dennis 2, 399) and "terrible, gutted" (Dennis, 3, 577), "shook up" (Edward, 3, 550), and "in a daze" (Grant, 2, 294). Howard (2, 450) said it was "pretty devastating." The revelation of the sexual abuse of children led to removal from teaching roles, loss of ministry, imprisonment, public exposure, and a

challenge to the identity they had developed during their adult lives. One participant momentarily contemplated taking his own life: "The choice was, do I turn the steering wheel to the right or to the left? I'd got to that stage" (Christopher, 1, 1141).

8.1.2 Loss and Grieving

According to Worden (2018), the experience of loss can challenge a person's fundamental values and beliefs. Loss is disorientating and removes aspects of predictability, regularity and sometimes significant structures and patterns in the person's life. The loss of one's good name and possibly the loss of membership and the process of disengagement from the religious order within which you have lived your life can be painful and confusing.

The participants suffered significant losses, including the esteem of others, their roles, and parts of their identities (Chapter 5). They had to adjust to the new and socially stigmatised identities of prisoner and sex offender. The participants spoke about the impact of discovery and how they managed to process their experiences and then emerge with new identities, which required a negotiation regarding how to remain connected to and/or separated from their past as Marist brothers. For those who remained in the order, it meant adjusting to restrictions while finding a new role, and for those who left it required thinking about which aspects of their past and which relationships continued to have meaning and value for them.

8.1.3 Understanding the Abuse

I will now turn to the findings that were presented in Chapter 6 regarding how the participants understood the abuse from their perspective, making use of the themes identified in the introduction to this chapter.

8.1.3.1 Attachment

John Bowlby (1969) proposed a theory of the importance of attachments in human development that suggests that infants and children who establish secure attachments with their caregivers develop a capacity for healthy secure relationships. He further suggested that these early relationships establish templates that provide the basis for relationships in later life. The child learns that it is worthy of love and that caregivers can be relied on to provide love and security. These relationships provide the basis for a range of social and relationship skills, as well as being the foundation for self-confidence, self-esteem, and resilience. Studies (for example, Garmezy, 1985) have shown that resilient children tend to come from warm, loving families, though some children manage to overcome significant difficulties and a range of adverse childhood events (ACE), navigate through their difficulties, and emerge as skilled, capable, emotionally resilient adults.

Levenson et al. (2017, p. 115) reflected on possible factors that helped to explain the relationship between ACEs and sexual offending. One explanation may lie in early sexualisation or exposure to sexual behaviours or material, as was the case with Andrew, Bernard, and Howard who all experienced sexual abuse in their childhood. These experiences can have an effect on the sexual development and "template" of the person, and can affect attitudes to sexuality in adulthood. Levenson et al. also suggest that the experience of being chosen and valued, with the additional experience of illicit sexuality, may have enhanced the self-esteem of the abused child, leading to a tendency to repeat this behaviour when searching for "attention, affection, control or intimacy" (2017, p. 115). This may have been the case for Andrew, Bernard, and Howard. Levenson et al. also noted that men attracted to minors who sought help for their attractions began masturbation and sexual contact with others at an earlier age than those attracted to adults. This can be seen in Dennis's description of his experience with masturbation. They also suggest that people who had difficulty forming caring, trusting relationships with adults may turn to children for emotional and sexual needs as they are seen as less

threatening. As discussed in Chapter 3, the participants agreed that this theory helps to explain their choice in engaging with children to meet their sexual and emotional needs.

The participants spoke about adverse events in their childhood and how these may have influenced their behaviour (Chapter 6). Maruna wrote: "Essentially we have rediscovered something everybody knew until a few generations ago: that children who experience terrible things—like abuse, neglect, family tragedies, head injuries—are at elevated risk of any number of tragic life outcomes, from suicide to addiction all the way to serious violence" (*Belfast Telegraph*, 8 November 2019).

While attachment is unquestionably a critical component of the range of factors that can lead to the abuse of children by men, it should also be noted that there are many men who suffered from adverse events in their childhood and who are insecurely attached in adult life. The vast majority of these men do not abuse children. It is therefore necessary to explore other factors that are part of the complex explanation of the abuse of children by clerics.

8.1.3.2   Intimacy Deficits and Loneliness

Human beings have a fundamental need for closeness and intimacy. We read in the book of Genesis that "it is not right that the man [sic] should be alone" (NJB, Gn. 2:23). This observation has been supported by human experience and psychological research. Marshall (2010, p. 81) has shown that the formation of secure adult relationships is difficult for many sex offenders. (The findings on the participants' reflections on the lack of adult relationships in their lives were discussed in Chapter 7). This has been traced back to problems in the early years (discussed above), leading to deficits in intimacy, with consequent experiences of emotional loneliness. It has been suggested that adults who abuse children turn to children out of a fear of rejection by adults. Children may be seen and experienced as more trustworthy (Ward et al., 1996, p. 24), and able to provide the worth

and validation that the offender does not experience from adults. The offender may seek to achieve intimacy through affective and sexual contact with a child, conflating the emotional and sexual intimacy he experiences in this abusive relationship with mature adult intimacy, which is the product of reciprocal sharing, appropriate self-disclosure and risk, and mutuality.

Bernard, Christopher, Dennis, Grant, and Edward spoke about the lack of intimacy in their lives at the time when they abused. Bernard and Christopher spoke about engaging with the children almost as equal partners. They found the experience validating at a time when they were experiencing stress. Bernard was afraid of rejection by adults and by students who rebuffed his advances. Christopher felt ill at ease in relationships with adults, especially adult women. Edward did not begin to relate in an adult way with women until he was in his forties (after he had stopped the behaviour that the boys experienced as abusive), and Dennis was aware of the lack of normal male companionship in his life due to an overinvestment in work and responsibilities. Grant did not have adult friends with whom he could be intimate, and the children whom he abused provided an outlet for relationship and sexual needs.

These findings about loneliness and lack of intimacy were reflected in the John Jay study (2011) where it was reported that:

> Priests who lacked close social bonds . . . were more likely to sexually abuse minors than those who had a history of close social bonds. (John Jay, 2011, p. 4)

Among the recommendations of the John Jay Report was that priests should have opportunities to form friendships and social relationship with people who are age-appropriate (John Jay Report, 2011, p. 121), to reduce the consequences and dangers of loneliness and lack of intimacy in their lives. Marist life did not always provide opportunities for healthy adult

relationships. For the participants in this study, the sexual abuse of children provided a maladaptive way to have these needs met.

8.1.3.3   Emotion Regulation

Researchers have commented on the maladaptive coping strategies and diminished emotional management skills of sex offenders (Gillespie & Beech, 2017, p. 248). Fisher, Beech, and Browne (1999, p. 480) noted that sex offenders scored higher on levels of personal distress than non-offenders, and they interpreted this finding as evidence of an inability to cope with negative affect. Gillespie and Beech (2017, p. 250) noted that there appears to be an increased prevalence of anxiety problems among sex offenders. This is consistent with research by Geary (2003, p. 87) that found that twice the number of sex offenders than would be found in the normal population scored in the Very High category for the NEO-FFI Factor of Neuroticism, which is a reliable measure of a propensity to experience negative affect, and correlates with a higher prevalence of mental health problems and personality disorders (DSM V, Axis II). In a similar way, Ward and Hudson (2000) suggested that if an offender fails in his ability to inhibit a desire to abuse a child, then he will experience negative affect as a result of a failure of self-efficacy. The consequent decision to abuse may lead to the positive feelings associated with relief from the effort of trying to resist a strong desire, the physiological pleasure of sexual contact, and the satisfaction and warmth that arises from intimate contact and comfort.

Andrew used sexual contact with children to self-soothe and experience human touch and closeness with children. Frank and Howard identified a lack of self-regulation as components of their abuse, and Edward spoke about the compulsive aspect of his desire to help boys. Andrew, Dennis, Grant, and Howard spoke in different ways about not being able to stop their behaviour, i.e., a failure to self-regulate, despite being aware that what they were doing was wrong. The sexual abuse of children can therefore become a maladaptive coping strategy for men whose emotion-

regulatory capacities may have been compromised in infancy and childhood.

8.1.3.4   Guilt and Shame

Guilt and shame are considered as "self-conscious" and "moral" emotions (Tangney and Dearing, 2002, p. 2) as they arise in the context of behaviours that are deemed to offend against rules, moral norms, or cultural understandings and values, or which expose parts of the self to the judgment and censure of others. Guilt and shame also have significant religious resonances, as Adam and Eve's sense of shame at their nakedness in the Garden of Eden led them to try to hide from Yahweh (Gn. 3:9–10). St Paul wrote that "all have sinned" (Rm. 3:23) and therefore stand in need of God's forgiveness to take away their guilt.

From the perspective of psychology, guilt is considered a pro-social emotion, as the unpleasant feeling associated with guilt can be dispelled when the person apologises or makes amends in some way for the offending behaviour. Shame is a more complex emotion as it is the result of a global negative self-appraisal as a bad person or one who is deficient or "damaged" in some way. When the self is seen as the source of problematic behaviours then this will impact on the person's self-esteem, which the participants identified as a factor in their abusive behaviour.

Tangney and Dearing (2002, p. 112) noted that shame-prone persons often have poor interpersonal skills and demonstrate limited capacity for empathy, which is a pro-social emotion. A deficit in empathy has been identified as a factor in the abuse of children. Members of religious orders commit themselves to follow Christ, and Marist brothers are committed to caring for children, particularly those who are poor or disadvantaged. It is difficult to account for a lack of empathy that would lead to the abuse of a child for people who have undergone a selection and formation process to become members of a religious order. Baron-Cohen (2011, p. 116) suggests that "at the very moment of the act, the empathy circuit 'goes

down'." He hypothesises that this may be a "transient turning off of the system" (Baron-Cohen, 2011, p. 116) which helps to make sense in the context of religious brothers and priests—who are otherwise mostly empathic individuals—who commit an act that transgresses personal moral standards and the criminal law. Keenan identified a lack of empathic perspective-taking as one of the factors that contributed to sexual abuse by clergy (2012, p. 241).

Marshall et al. (2009) noted that after engaging in a behaviour the person may have found morally repugnant, they tend to feel "powerless, helpless, and worthless" (p. 219). However, instead of avoiding the unacceptable behaviour, shame "results in the person feeling unable to stop the bad behaviour that generated the emotion" (p. 219).

The issue of shame is particularly pertinent for the participants who identified as homosexual. Howard and Bernard, in particular, expressed the fear that anyone would discover their orientation, and said that they felt a need to hide this part of themselves from others. This was discussed in more depth in Chapter 7. Cahill and Wilkinson (2017, p. 251) concluded that the lack of integration of sexual orientation was problematic for Catholic seminarians, clergy, and brothers rather than homosexual orientation *per se*. Keenan reached a similar conclusion, pointing to the pressure on homosexual Catholic clergy and religious to conceal their sexual identity, resulting in feelings of shame, which became problematic in relation to the sexual abuse of children.

The psychological research referenced above helps us to see how behaviours that were morally unacceptable became part of the lives of the participants, partly as they provided feelings of closeness, affection, and pleasure, and partly as the men who behaved in this way had not found alternative coping strategies to deal with stress, conflict, and experiences of negative emotion—especially guilt and shame—in their lives.

8.2   Qualitative Research with Priests and Brothers who have Abused Children

8.2.1 Christian Brothers Research (1998)

The 28th General Chapter of the Christian Brothers passed a resolution directing that a study be undertaken "to discover and share our own truth in regard to child abuse (Faulkner, 1998, p. 4). One of the suggested tasks was "if possible, to speak with some brothers who have admitted offending in this area" (1998, p. 5). Brother G.T. Faulkner was asked to undertake the research and write the report that was submitted to the Congregational Leadership Team in April 1998. Brother Faulkner interviewed six Christian brothers as part of his research and provided brief summaries based on what they shared. The factors that these men spoke about have been analysed based on the same clusters that were used in Chapters 6 and 7:

8.2.1.1   *Personal Factors*

- Adverse childhood events
- Victim of child abuse by Christian brother (also, abuse by a female carer, and abuse by older students)
- Children were non-threatening
- Intense anger against self and the Christian Brothers
- Attraction to boys.

8.2.1.2   *Deficits*

- Lack of self-esteem
- Lack of peer relationships
- No contact with women
- Lack of conversation due to fear of particular friendships

- Lack of self-awareness
- Never spoke up for fear of not being valued, or losing favour
- Lack of sexual understanding.

8.2.1.3   Unmet Needs

- Friendship and mutual trust
- Loneliness
- Lack of fulfilment of adult needs
- Denial of personal needs.

8.2.1.4   The Process of the Abuse

- Substance abuse in lieu of friendship
- Search for friendship found expression in young people.

8.2.1.5   Seeking Help

- One brother reported his offence to the authorities.

8.2.1.6   Situational Factors

- Work in an orphanage
- Overwork
- The orphanage as a closed system
- Being close to children
- "Fell into" abusive behaviour

8.2.1.7   Organisation and Culture

- Conditioned by the congregation into being passive, which was a factor in non-rejection of children's advances
- Sent to do work without preparation

- Fear of being sent away

- A congregational culture of negatives:

  - Never say what you think or feel

  - Emphasis on avoiding wrongs and not doing right

  - Authoritarian leaders

  - No community discussion about sexuality.

8.2.1.8   *Spirituality and Theology*

- Obedience: "I did what I was told."

- Formation: No room for critical thinking

- Masturbation—and no one to talk to

- The Examen.[75]

There are many points of similarity between the data provided (above) in G.T. Faulkner's interviews with six Christian brothers (1998) and the factors that emerged in this research. Br Faulkner did not explicitly identify a need for affection or touch; but the repetition of the word "friendship" as an unmet need in the list of factors, the absence of peer relationships, lack of intimacy and contact with women, demonstrate that similar issues were present as were found in the lives of Marist brothers who abused children.

The word friend is used 28 times by the participants in the transcripts and friendship appears 12 times. The word "friends" is used 43 times by the participants, but often in the general sense of a group of friends—whether

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[75] The Examen is a practice from the tradition of St Ignatius Loyola that is part of Catholic spirituality. Individuals are encouraged to review the day asking where God has been present and how they have failed to respond to the promptings of God's grace. The intention is to heighten people's awareness of God's presence in their lives and to promote sentiments of gratitude. In the 19th and the first half of the 20th century it was often seen as a way to focus on the individual's sins, leading to feelings of repentance and to resolve to amend the person's behaviour in accordance with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. When practiced as it was intended, the Examen can lead to healthy spiritual growth. However, it also had the tendency to encourage scrupulosity, lack of self-worth, and to reinforce feelings of failure. See https://www.jesuits.org/spirituality/the-ignatian-examen/.

in childhood, adolescence, fellow brothers, colleagues or acquaintances or the "Parents and Friends Association"—but without the specificity of the existence of a close personal friend. Every participant used the word "friend" or "friendship" at least once during the interviews. Bernard, Christopher, Dennis, Frank, and Howard made references to friends in adolescence, Andrew and Howard spoke about an adult male friend who was not a brother, and Andrew, Christopher, Grant, and Edward spoke about adult females who became friends. Bernard, Christopher, and Howard referred to Marist brothers who were friends and Edward spoke about confiding in a brother at the point where he had received the allegation of abuse. Dennis spoke about brothers who have become friends since the abuse became known. Bernard, referring to another brother, said, "I still couldn't confide in him even though he was a very close friend" (Howard, 1, 375–376). Frank was aware of the need for a friend and spoke about "someone who was approachable as a friend, that I could talk to, and that was interested in similar things to me, like, the sport and that" (Frank, 2, 280–281).

Keenan has written about the way that some abusers had their need for friendship met through the boys whom they abused, and this can be seen in the interviews with Dennis, Grant, and Frank who spoke about the boys whom they abused in terms of friendship. Grant, for example, spoke about four boys who were "close" friends (Grant, 2, 33–35). The participants valued the experience of brotherhood, but there appears to have been an absence of strong adult friendships among the brothers. The Common Rule of 1960 states that:

> The love they have for one another will make no distinction, and single out no one for those selfish friendships that break the bond of charity." (1960, #382)

This was the context in which the older participants began their Marist lives: close friendships were discouraged and were seen as "selfish." The three younger participants may have had more freedom to develop

friendships (which they mentioned) but this did not prevent abuse from taking place. The Australian Report made reference to Keenan's submission with regard to intimacy and friendship:

> She told us that the participants in her study constructed their priestly and religious vocations on fear of breaking with celibate commitment and fear of displeasing others, including: avoiding relationships with women and avoiding particular friendships with men. In essence, these men avoided intimacy. (Royal Commission, vol. 16, p. 606)

A fear of "particular friendships" was part of religious formation up until the 1950s and is often understood as a fear of the possibility of the development of homosexual relationships. Wadell writes about the importance of friendship, and quotes David Wood, an Australian theologian and pastor working in the United States, who said, "We all need a witness to our lives. We need people to love us in the particularity of our own lives. Without this, we live in crushing anonymity" (2017, p. 103). The brotherhood experienced by the participants is part of a collective experience, whereas friendship is interpersonal. The Christian brothers who spoke to G.T. Faulkner were aware of the absence of this kind of close friendship—as distinct from brotherhood—as was Frank. Wadell concludes his article by returning to Wood who "suggested that the best defence against inappropriate intimacy, whether physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual, is appropriate intimacy in other relationships of our lives" (2017, p. 120). Such relationships can provide resilience, ballast, a sense of being loved and valued, with the possibility of taking the risk of sharing aspects of ourselves where we experience encouragement and a sense of being valued, as well as our vulnerability, and a space where we can be held and heard.

There was also a culture of work, fear of expressing feelings and voicing criticism, the influence of obedience and authoritarian leaders, as well as adverse childhood events, personal experience of abuse, areas of deficit,

and unmet needs. Masturbation was a taboo and there was a lack of sexual education or preparation for celibacy.

Faulkner notes that most offenders are "good people" who may not have offended if they did not have access to children and were living in such difficult personal circumstances. He notes that they are not happy people, and that the abuse developed as a maladaptive way to have personal needs met. In his reflection, he quotes an expert who identified family relationships as a key to understanding abusive behaviour (attachment issues), along with the Jansenistic spirituality that made it difficult to have a positive self-image or a spirituality that provided support and not condemnation. He repeats the observation that very few clerical offenders are paedophiles and points to the importance of situational factors as significant variables that help to explain the abuse.

One of the participants in Faulkner's research said that "he was conditioned by the congregation into being passive, and passivity was a factor in non-rejection of kids' advances" (p. 56). While responsibility always rests with the adult (or the person with power), this insight points to an organisational factor that had a role in the abuse. This will be discussed in Chapter 9 with regard to moral injury.

8.3   Academic Studies

To my knowledge, there are three qualitative studies that interviewed clerics who had abused children. Keenan undertook research with seven priests and two brothers in Ireland. The results of her research formed the basis for her ground-breaking book, *Child sexual abuse and the Catholic Church: Gender, power, and organizational culture* (2012). Winship (2011) undertook research in Australia with seven brothers and five priests who had abused children under 13 years of age. Tourangeau (2017) interviewed 10 diocesan priests who had abused children, and 10 diocesan priests who had not abused children, 10 members of religious orders

(priests and brothers) who had abused children and 10 who had not abused children. His focus was on aspects of lifespan development and the socialization processes that helped to form them.

8.3.1 Marie Keenan (2012)

Keenan's work is an impressive synthesis of previous research and breaks new ground in her integration of social scientific perspectives and analysis from the perspective of gender, masculinities, social organisation theory, theology, and ecclesiology. Her understanding and analysis are consistent with the findings of Faulkner, Winship, Tourangeau and this research project. She mentions the following factors that emerged in the course of her research with her participants: a history of childhood sexual abuse, the importance and prizing of purity in personal sexual behaviour, inadequate preparation for celibacy, the Church's teaching on homosexuality and masturbation, the Church's culture of secrecy and denial regarding clerical sexuality, the ideal of a non-sexual clerical masculinity that had cultural capital in Irish society, fear and obedience, emotional loneliness, the use of the confessional as a space to confide in God, and the strategies that were used to overcome moral values which, if acknowledged and attended to, could have prevented their abusive behaviour (similar to exculpatory narratives).

Keenan described her participants' formation for celibacy and efforts to live a celibate life (2012, pp. 129–153). In the Church and Irish culture in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, any sexual thought, desire, or action outside of marriage was considered as a mortal sin. The approach to celibacy in the seminaries and formation houses was overly intellectualised and there were no opportunities to talk about normal human desires for affection, intimacy, and touch. Intimate contact with women and "particular friendships" with men were to be avoided as they would be the beginning of the slippery slope to sin and impurity. Any thoughts of sex resulted in anxiety, fear, and shame, and efforts to avoid thinking about sex only

resulted in self-obsessed hypervigilance. The participants in her study said that in order to live celibacy they tried to be sexless. Matters were even more difficult for homosexual men as society and Church considered homosexual orientation as disordered (Prusak, 2024, p. 139). This led to efforts to conceal their desires and to experiencing feelings of shame and self-loathing.

These findings are consistent with the findings from this study. Keenan concludes, however, that since there are many priests and brothers who have found ways to live with a commitment to chastity in healthy ways, that celibacy itself is not the problem, but "a Catholic sexual ethic and theology of priesthood that 'problematizes' the body and erotic sexual desire and emphasises chastity and purity over a relational ethic" (2012, p. 235).

I propose to examine four aspects of Dr Keenan's conclusions that may merit further consideration in the light of the findings from this research project.

1. Rule-keeping
2. The burden of perfection
3. The powerful/powerless axis
4. The theology of ontological change.

8.3.1.1 Rule-keepers

Keenan concludes that the abusers she interviewed tended to be rule-keepers (2012, p 238). She bases this on her clinical experience: "My clinical observations and research indicate that those clerical men who went on to commit sexual violations were more inclined than other clergy to be strict rule-keepers" (p. 169). Rule-keeping did not feature as a key explanatory variable with the brothers and former brothers who were interviewed for this research project. When I reflect on the British Marist brothers who were identified in the Marist Case Study (# 7) of the Scottish

Child Abuse Inquiry (2021), one brother (born in 1916, novitiate in Italy, 1930–1932) could be understood through the lens of Keenan's conclusions. He trained as a "working brother" and his characteristic use of inflated (sometimes officious) language, which was often not appropriate to a particular situation, may have been an attempt to compensate for his lack of university education. The allegations of abuse made against him date from the time when he was appointed (at 40 years of age) to a preparatory school where he had contact with children and opportunities to abuse. He was appointed as community leader in this community when he was 60 years of age. After receiving this appointment from the Provincial, he announced, "My first command." This appointment to a position of authority was clearly very important to him. He was also fastidious about liturgical and other rules.

Three of the other brothers mentioned in the SCAI Report (2021)—born in 1922, 1926, 1927, with formation between 1936–1945— were no more inclined to be rule-keepers than others of their generation, and arguably were less inclined to be rule-keepers than many of their peers. Two brothers from the next generation (born in the 1950s) who abused, would certainly not be regarded as men who were noted for keeping rules. It is worth asking if Keenan's research reflects the Irish Church and formation in the 1940s and 1950s rather than being an observation that can be applied to clergy offenders in general. Keeping the rule was a key focus of religious formation in the period before Vatican II, and was reflected in the maxim "Keep the rule and the rule will keep you."

8.3.1.2　　The Burden of Perfection

Keenan describes different "masculinities" and suggests that clerical masculinity is a marginalised masculinity. There are different kinds of clerical masculinities, with different emphases and levels of commitment to celibacy, capacity for compassion for self and others, and the ability to negotiate the realities of human need and personal relationships (2012, pp. 246–247). She suggests that Perfect Celibate Clerical Masculinity holds

the hegemonic position in the Church and that this version of clerical masculinity was more likely than others to lead to the sexual abuse of children (2012, p. 244). Those who were formed in and who continued to try to be faithful to Perfect Celibate Clerical Masculinity aspired to become "holy" and "sexless" (2012, p. 246), denying their human need for affection, intimacy, and human contact, and attempting to sublimate their needs through work and the pursuit of excellence in their ministry and the moral life. Since this was an impossible aspiration, they were doomed to failure.

Keenan writes that the men who abused in her study attempted to live a life of moral perfection (2012, pp. 245–247). The aspiration to perfection in the spiritual and moral life has its roots in Matthew 5:48 where we read, "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect" (New International Version). At its best, this injunction can inspire and motivate people to high moral standards, spiritual discipline and fidelity, and high achievement. However, it often leads to feelings of failure and discouragement as perfection is impossible in this life. Au (1995, pp. 402–403) noted that perfectionism can drive people in ministry to overwork and a state of chronic fatigue. He writes that "like the pharisees [they can] lay heavy burdens on people with whom they serve" (p. 402). They can impose their impossibly high standards on others, and their failure to achieve these standards can lead to judgment or anger.

Turning to the participants in this study, Dennis and Howard used the word "perfectionist" in relation to the workaholism that was part of Marist life at that time. Edward tried to avoid courting popularity in order to be respected by superiors and other brothers. In effect, he attempted to live a distorted version of the Marist ideal, which he rejected in mid-life. Howard aspired to be the best principal and secretary of the Association of Principals to compensate for his feeling of shame at being gay. The Marist culture put a high value on work, which the participants acknowledged was also rewarding for them. These brothers were certainly driven. It is true that Edward and Howard's sense of failure led to anger, frustration,

and the punishment of students. Perfectionism, however, does not emerge as a significant factor for Andrew, Bernard, Christopher, Grant, or Frank, although they manifested some of the characteristics identified by Marie Keenan, e.g., Grant substituted relationships with the boys who assisted him for meaningful relationships in community or with adults.

Marist brothers who were formed in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were offered a diet of piety and devotionality, based on an ascetical theology that elevated perfectionism into a rule of life (Lanfrey, 2016, p. 318). Most men who were formed in this religious culture did not become child abusers. When I reflect on the six brothers of the Province of Britain and Ireland whom I mentioned above, the same pattern emerges. The eldest (born in 1922) was certainly driven by a moral perfectionism and preoccupation with liturgical, moral, and community rules that he could not live. The next three eldest made a range of compromises with their Marist values, without imposing perfection on others in a moral sense. (All three also abused alcohol to different degrees). The younger two could not be described as perfectionists and were not known for a commitment to the spiritual and religious dimensions of Marist life. Writing about the one born in 1951, a former Provincial wrote that he was astonished when he learned about his lack of spiritual interest and development.[76]

8.3.1.3   *Powerful over Children but Powerless in the Church*

One of Keenan's key observations is that the priests and brothers whom she interviewed felt powerless in the Church but were powerful in their ministry (2012, pp. 237–239). She writes, "The clerical perpetrators lived out of an unreflective script of private powerlessness while ministering in a site of unsupervised and unchallenged public dominance. . . . it is this dynamic of power/powerlessness that is implicated in their sexual offending" (2012, p. 238). It is a persuasive theory. Keenan acknowledges Cossins (2000) who suggested that some men abused

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[76] Letter from Brother Lewis Dorrian to the Provincial (1998), Marist Safeguarding Archive.

children to compensate for feelings of powerlessness. Keenan writes that "in the case of Catholic clergy, the power/powerless dynamic works in a different way" (2012, p. 239). The essence of Keenan's thesis appears to be that the priests and brothers felt powerless in the Church but experienced power over children when they abused them. Secrecy kept their public role and persona intact.

The participants in this study held positions of responsibility that they abused when they were sexually involved with children. They unquestionably abused their power. However, they were not "powerless" as they had "agency" in their roles as teachers, school principals, and sports coaches where they could develop leadership and other human skills and capacities. Andrew and Grant felt powerless over their behaviour and the lack of response. The experience of not being listened to by people in positions of responsibility reinforced their sense of being put aside. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Andrew was called to meet the Provincial who had been informed about his abuse of a child. He recalled a brief conversation that ended when the Provincial said to him, "Well, you fix it up. I haven't got time to talk to you." Andrew felt "pushed aside" (Andrew, 2, 199–216).

Grant also did not feel listened to when he tried to talk about his behaviour. Grant raised the matter with the Provincial, and with the curate in confession. According to Grant, "he panicked and he rushed off to the bishop but again nothing occurred. There was no reaction, no talking, just saying 'oh, it shouldn't have happened'" (Grant, 1, 246–251). He was also due to meet a brother who was working in child protection to talk about his concerns, but this meeting did not take place. When asked how he felt about the lack of response on these three occasions when he was looking for help, he said, "I was frustrated because I felt it was important but other people didn't" (Grant, 1, 238–251, 306–328).

Keenan says that the powerful/powerless paradox is "at the core of their sexual offending," and adds that "this is at the heart of the abuse issue for

Roman Catholic clergy" (p. 238). This theory may be valid—as
demonstrated in the life of two of the participants and at least one of the
British brothers referred to above—but more research, especially research
that can compare clerics from different age cohorts and cultures, may help
to tease out some of the complexities of the powerful/powerless dynamic.

8.3.1.4   Ontological Change

Keenan wrote that the theology of ontological change "is at the heart of
what I believe to be problematic," as "it underpins the theology of
priesthood and the ecclesiology that it fosters" (p. 236). In *Pastores Dabo
Vobis* (15 March 1992, #72) Pope John Paul II referred to the "ontological
and psychological bond" that is "located in the priest's very being" and
that is part of the consecration that takes place at ordination.[77] The
theology of ontological change was discussed as part of the Australian
Royal Commission. Dr Christopher Geraghty, a retired judge and former
priest, said that ordination changes a person's "very essence," as an
"indelible seal . . . goes on the soul" (ARC, vol. *16:2*, p. 619).

Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane said that "The language of
ontology is simply born of another time" (vol. *16:2*, p. 620). Keenan and
Tom Doyle, a priest and advocate of victims, said in their submissions that
the theology of ontological change, in combination with other aspects of
clericalism, contributed to the abuse crisis by setting "otherwise healthy
men apart from ordinary men in an unhealthy manner" (vol. *16:2*, p. 620).
Doyle believed that this theology led to the unjustified "entitlement, trust,
protection, and privileges enjoyed by priests" (Vol *16:2*, p. 621).

None of the men in the current study were ordained; however, they were
all vowed religious who lived a "consecrated life," which Keenan
identifies as having a similar effect as the theology of ontological change
as it bestows a sense of being special, which is related to the sense of being

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[77] See https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html. Accessed 11 July 2024.

called by God (2012, p. 236). I believe that Keenan is correct in referencing the role of the theology of ontological change in helping to create a theological culture that led to clericalism, and, in turn, supported unhealthy aspects of the lives of priests. Following Keenan, the critique of this theology needs to be expanded and nuanced to include the theology of consecration. The key issue may lie in the influence of theologies that separate and elevate the priest or brother from ordinary lay Catholics and potentially alienate them from their own humanity, and the role of these theologies in the socialisation process that is known as "formation," and which impacted on the participants in this study. Her insight (shared with other commentators) of the role of the theology of ontological change needs to be nuanced and expanded to include the theology of consecration.

I believe that Keenan's theses have great value in helping us to understand priests and brothers who abuse children. However, I have concluded, based on the findings of this research project and my knowledge of some British and Irish Marist brothers who abused children, that they need to be nuanced and, like all research, require testing and development in the light of further research.

8.3.2 Jacqueline Winship (2011)

Winship interviewed 12 Australian men (seven brothers and five priests) who had abused children under 13 years of age. She shared her findings in her dissertation entitled *Cursed: Constructing the Experience of the Catholic Clergy Child Molester (2012).* Winship worked as a therapist at a centre in Australia that provided treatment for clergy with mental health problems, including those who had abused children. She identified "cursed desire and cursed identity" as key theoretical categories to understand the experience of these men, and situated this within societal and Church discourses about sexual behaviour with children, the judgment of society, theories of criminality, and the church's understanding of sexuality and sin. The overall aim of this study, she wrote, "was to engage with this

desire at an experiential level and to construct the subjective experience of
the molester, in the hopes that this might in some way contribute to fewer
future victims" (p. 13).

Winship provides evidence from the transcripts that support her
understanding that the abuse was the result of a complex interplay of
individual (personal history), systemic, cultural, and theological factors
that came together and led to the choices the men made to abuse children.
She discussed her findings through the lenses of psychoanalytic, cognitive-
behavioural, and multilevel theories of child abuse, as well as research and
writing about clerical offenders.

She concludes that these men felt cursed as a result of the aspects of life
history (dysfunctional families, early socialisation in Church formation
houses that prevented normal psychosexual development and the
development of healthy peer relationships), low self-esteem, alienation
from their bodies and sexual desires, and a Catholic culture that saw sexual
behaviour as a mortal sin and that did not provide any forums for the
healthy discussion and learning about what it means to be a sexual person
while trying to live a celibate life. They felt ashamed and cursed. They
also felt cursed as a result of the effect of exposure of their offences, due to
Church and societal judgments as "deviants" and "monsters."

Winship writes that the concept of "cursed" was identified as a central
unifying theoretical code that could be tracked through each of the core
categories (p. 103) and the three central themes of family of origin, early
sexualization and vocational issues (p. 108). She reports that six of the
participants described their desire as "a kind of addiction" (p. 142) which
could feel like a burden, unsought urge, and, in that sense, something they
were "cursed with" (p. 143) There is no mention of the word "cursed" in
any of the excerpts from the transcripts, and it was reached by Winship as
a result of a process of building categories, identifying superordinate
codes, and then reducing them by a process of reflection and analysis. The
phrase "broken brotherhood" was chosen as a title for this research project

in a similar way. While the word "cursed" may accurately reflect the participants' experience, it also runs the danger of reinforcing the very discourses that Winship describes. She writes that they felt "cursed by others," and references the use of the word "monster" (p. 192).

Winship recognizes that the dominant discourses leave "little room for redemption or for the development of a more positive identity that might in fact mitigate the risk of any future offending" (p. 277). The choice of "child molester" to describe the participants and the identification of being "cursed' as the key theoretical finding run the risk of reinforcing this sense of hopelessness rather than offering a possible route to redemption. Maruna (2001), in his study of desistance, concluded that the participants who lived out of "redemption scripts" had a better chance of desisting from crime and building better and more meaningful lives than those who lived out of "condemnation scripts" who had a negative view of the world, and found confirmatory data in their life experiences that resulted in being trapped in a narrative of condemnation of self and the world. The choice of "broken brotherhood" as a title hopefully reflects the idea that what was broken can be repaired, even though it will not be the same as before. It will always be fractured in some way. This offers the hope of redemption, and of living a more meaningful life. This idea was reflected in the responses of some of the participants, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Winship makes reference to aspects of formation and Church culture that, she suggests, contributed to the abuse: formation and early age of entry (p. 255), mandatory celibacy (p. 257), the Church's attitude to homosexuality (p. 259), abuse of power in the Church (p. 261), institutional denial and secrecy (p. 263), and institutional and social changes in the 1960s and 1970s (p. 263). These findings are consistent with reports from Commissions of Inquiry and research by Faulkner, Keenan, Tourangeau, and this research project.

Winship's research provides data that supports observations and research by others, including this research. In this way it offers confirmatory

evidence and validation of the growing body of research that points to individual, situational, cultural (including formation and theology), and systemic factors that contributed to abuse by priests and brothers. It is noteworthy that she does not reference the feeling of being powerless in the Church while being powerful over children which is a key feature of Keenan's theory of clerical abuse. Neither does she suggest that they were rule-keepers who imposed rules on others that they could not keep themselves, which emerged in Keenan's research.

8.3.3 John Michael Tourangeau (2017)

Tourangeau interviewed 10 diocesan priests and 10 members of religious orders (priests and brothers) who had abused children, and 10 diocesan priests and 10 members of religious orders who had no known history of child sexual abuse, who were in ministry, and who appeared to be healthy and well-adjusted. Tourangeau was interested to identify factors in their life histories and in the process of socialisation to become priests or brothers that may have contributed to offences against children. He found that there were no significant differences between the two groups (those who had offended and those who had not) in his study, and it was not possible to identify a single factor that explained abusive behaviour. However, he was able to identify differences between the groups that illuminate the problem of abuse in the Church. He identified family stressors (p. 77), especially unresolved and unreconciled traumas (ACE's) as a key factor, along with the following factors that contributed to abusive behaviour (p. 135): arrested sexual development, lack of sexual understanding and integration, perfectionistic spirituality and moral theology (p. 119), not being listened to, abuse of power by leaders and/or formators, inadequate formation (especially for celibacy), secret-keeping, the emphasis on avoiding particular friendships, lack of work–life balance, and inconsistent spiritual direction. He also noted a lack of quality in living and relating to others (p. 77).

He noted that "those who offended lost contact with themselves and with their respective religious order and diocesan communities." He said that "over time they cut themselves off from organisational and sense-making processes" (p. 135), and that those who participated in ongoing formation opportunities were less likely to have abused a minor (p. 77). Those who did not abuse found ways to integrate their life experiences, bring healing to traumatic and painful experiences, and build on strengths (p. 136). They showed higher emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and a capacity for reflection (p. 136).

The eight participants in this study were not cynical about their religious life; but they said that the demands of work meant that personal and spiritual reading all but disappeared from their lives. As already mentioned in Chapter 7 (7.3.5.), following the example and teaching of the Founder, "Love of work"—including manual work—was considered a key Marist value. The section on "Attitude to Work" of the Common Rules of 1960, which would have been the basis for Marist life for the five older participants (Andrew, Dennis, Edward, Frank, and Grant), contains the following sections:

> Religious life being by its very nature a life of penance, mortification and labour, nothing is more contrary to its spirit than idleness. (Common Rules, 1960, #184)

> The Brothers should consider that they have an obligation to give a helping hand in the organisation of activities within the school, or in those connected with it. (#191)

> The Brother Director should not tolerate idleness in the community, particularly in the case of the young brothers, but should see to it that all are usefully occupied, especially during the holidays. (#193)

While these rules do not require constant activity, they were part of a culture where work and avoiding idleness were highly valued. In the years after Vatican II, Superiors General raised concerns about the lack of spiritual development in the lives of the brothers. Brother Basilio Rueda, Superior General from 1967–1985, identified what he considered to be the five weakest points in the Institute in his Report to the General Chapter of 1985. The first three points he mentioned were:

- The rhythm of prayer in the communities;
- The authenticity of the personal prayer of the average Marist brother;
- The value of religious consecration. (Marist Brothers, 1986, p. 82).

Similarly, Brother Benito Arbués (1993–2001), addressing the General Chapter of 2001, identified a number of weaknesses in the Marist Institute including "a weak faith, or very little faith in the Lord," "diminished apostolic enthusiasm," and "a weak personal prayer and the formalism and poverty of community prayer" (Marist Brothers, May 2002, pp. 123–134). His successor, Brother Seán Sammon, in his address to the same General Chapter (2001) spoke directly about the issue of overwork and its consequences for the brothers:

> Are there some obstacles to avoid in our spiritual life today? For starters, the excessive activity that marks the lives of some of us borders on the pathological. (Marist Brothers, May 2002, p. 145)

Brother Seán went on to criticise "a preoccupation with efficiency that does violence to a listening heart, and a restlessness that bears little, if any, fruit" (Marist Brothers, May 2002, p. 146). As already mentioned, Edward spoke about the Provincial who prized efficiency over popularity and said that this comment had a significant influence on his attitude to work and the persona he adopted in his work as a teacher.

This reductionistic assessment of the members of the Institute to their work capability, with the implicit judgment of a person's worth being based on constant activity and taking on more responsibilities, was identified by the participants as an aspect of Marist culture which contributed to an unhealthy lifestyle. As noted in Chapter 6, there was little room for personal needs, spiritual development was ignored or avoided, and members compensated for a range of personal deficits by making unhealthy choices. The participants indicated that overwork and the overvaluing of work were factors that contributed to their abusive behaviour.

Personal prayer or contemplation is the space where individuals take time to be present to God. This usually means that thoughts and feelings in the preconscious are allowed to come to consciousness. This allows the person to be honest with himself in the presence of God. The participants knew at one level that what they were doing was wrong, but did not want to allow this knowledge to reach awareness. Avoiding personal prayer was an effective way to avoid a self-to-self encounter, and to avoid the feeling of judgment and shame that they were likely to experience in prayer. Bernard, interestingly, enjoyed his time for personal prayer, which he found fulfilling; but when asked what he did when he found himself thinking about his sexual activity with the boys in his care, he replied, "It was like a hiccup. . . . I was minimising what was happening and I needed to, I suppose, for self-preservation" (Bernard, 1, 324–340). Bernard minimised the abuse to protect himself from experiencing shame and going down the black hole where he became depressed.

8.4   Repairing what was Broken

Winship expressed concern that current discourses about clerical sex offenders leave little room for redemption or hope, and I have expressed my concern about the use of the word "cursed" in the title she chose for her dissertation. Ward proposed his "Good Lives" theory of treatment for

sex offenders in a series of papers published in and after 2002. The core idea is simple: it is not sufficient to train sex offenders to identify what to avoid, as avoidance goals offer no rewards to those who try to avoid specific behaviours. People are rewarded by achieving meaningful goals, and treatment needs to offer offenders a good life they can aspire to, as well as providing training to desist from behaviours that have damaged others and resulted in significant losses and suffering in their own lives.

Ward suggests that there are 11 primary human goods:

1. Life (including healthy living and functioning)
2. Knowledge
3. Excellence in work (including mastery experiences)
4. Excellence in play (including mastery experiences)
5. Excellence in agency (i.e., autonomy and self-directedness)
6. Inner peace (i.e., freedom from emotional turmoil and stress)
7. Friendship (intimate, romantic, family)
8. Community
9. Spirituality (meaning and purpose in life)
10. Pleasure
11. Creativity.

The participants in this study spoke about ways they had found meaningful activity (sometimes while in prison) and how they had attempted to find some inner peace through developing meaningful relationships based on friendship (brotherhood) and service, and through developing their spiritual lives.

Andrew joined the residents committee in the care home where he lives and established friendly relations with those who care for him. Bernard said that he is now better off as a former Marist brother and has been doing office work and minibus driving for a charity, as well as caring for his father (Bernard 3, 421–440). Edward spoke about being the primary carer

for another brother and of spreading "a great deal of good will among the brothers" (Edward, 3, 617–620, 1102–1103). Frank spoke about having found various ways to help his family and the community, and that he has worked out a way of "bringing Christ to others" (Frank, 2, 76–79). He also writes poetry. Grant found ways to support other men in prison and, on his release, took over responsibility for a holiday home for the brothers (Grant, 2, 134–135, 251–252). Howard did voluntary work and found a whole community of people with whom he could be of service and develop a network of relationships (3, 294–295).

These are examples of ways that the participants found meaningful work, established new relationships, or provided care and support in Marist communities. They found ways of being creative, used or acquired new skills and knowledge, and put their focus on others and not only themselves and their losses.

8.5   Spirituality and Sense-Making

Ward identified spirituality as a primary good and this is a particularly important area in the lives of Marist brothers and former brothers who abused children. Spirituality and spiritual practices help people to make sense of their lives, and they are regarded as essential components of the work of sense-making for priests and members of religious orders. In the final section of this chapter, I will share the findings about the participants' practice of spirituality at the point in their lives when the abuse happened and contrast that with what the findings reveal about their spiritual lives at the time of the interviews.

8.5.1 Spirituality at the Time of the Abuse

Andrew (2, 972–982) said, "Spirituality wasn't there . . . there was no depth to it. . . . It had no guts." Christopher (3, 207–210) said that prayer was about responding to the bell that was rung outside of the office. He spoke about the mass for the boarders each week and said, "It was almost like putting on a performance for them." Dennis spoke about fitting in prayer later in the day but said that "it was not quality prayer" (3, 151–152). He said that in the place where the abuse began his spirituality was "waning" (3, 188–189). When asked how he held everything together, he said, "With difficulty because I was still self-masturbating as well at the time so I was confessing that" (3, 234–235). Dennis added, "But I wasn't confessing the other abuse that was going on with the boys. I was praying to God for forgiveness but . . . I found that very difficult because I needed to talk to someone about it" (3, 239–241). Edward (2, 191–192) said that he had not read a spiritual book since 1960: "Like, it's just survival . . . so spiritual formation's sort of gone by the wayside." Frank said that he loved the work but that spiritual life was not something they discussed very much (2, 283–285). He said, "I was aware that my teaching suffered enormously (because of the workload) and my spiritual life as was meant to be prayers—numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, et cetera—all those sorts of things were very much affected negatively" (2, 281–285). Grant said that "it was a fairly regular, regimented type of prayer" (2, 535). "We had prayers on the hour because someone rang a bell and prayer probably wasn't a great area of importance at that stage" (2, 1042–3). He added, "It was just, 'We'll do the exercises and then we'll head off to school.'" (1, 890–893, 898). Howard said that during the offending, prayer "was pretty tough in the sense of where is God in all of this and where is forgiveness in it?" (3, 245–246).

8.5.2 Spirituality and Sense-Making as Part of Recovery

Spirituality and prayer became more important to them as part of their recovery and sense-making of their lives, something that had been largely absent at the time of the abuse. None of them had spiritual directors at the time of the abuse; but some have spiritual directors now and have worked to develop their spiritual lives. Tourangeau described spiritual direction as:

> Mentoring and guiding another in relationship framed by spiritual counsel and insight into one's relationship with God, and how that relationship is made manifest in oneself and others, especially those served in and through ministerial endeavours. (Tourangeau, 2017, p. 86)

Tourangeau noted that spiritual direction has not been a consistent feature in the lives of many priests and brothers; but that the offenders in his study had demonstrated fidelity to this practice in their lives after discovery. A similar pattern can be seen with the participants in this study. Spiritual direction is a space where individuals can benefit from the help of another person to make sense of their lives within a spiritual framework.

Andrew, who earlier in the interviews had referred to his mother's influence on his own spirituality, spoke about what a student noticed when he began to develop his own spiritual life:

> So my spirituality started to develop and hopefully come through. I remember a kid in class said to me, "You've got a great love for Mary, haven't you?" (Andrew, 4, 562–564)

Christopher, who is no longer a Marist brother, spoke of the importance of the Marist tradition in his own life and in his process of recovery:

> The whole image of Mary and Jesus[78]. . . that to me is the basis of
> my faith. I believe very much in a forgiving and loving God,
> Father. . . . But the whole Champagnat devotion "all to Jesus
> through Mary, all to Mary through Jesus," that was very much part
> of it. (Christopher, 3, 433–444)

Frank spoke about "having to start from scratch" (Frank, 2, 739). He said,
"So I'm not only passionate about being a Marist brother, I'm passionate
about being a Christian and a Catholic" (Frank, 2, 740). He referred to the
importance in his life of a contemporary book of Marist spirituality
entitled *Water from the rock* (2007),[79] which was produced by a group of
brothers and lay Marists:

> And I do believe that the brothers love me very much. My
> favourite book is *Water from the rock* (Frank, 1, 660–663). . . . I
> would say that I'm hugely Marist and I've always been. (Frank, 2,
> 493)

Frank can also speak with confidence about feeling loved by the brothers,
which is noteworthy given the way that priests and religious who have
abused children have often been criticised and demonised in the media, as
well as by some sections of the Church. They can feel ostracised and
"othered." Grant spoke about finding a new space for Mary in his spiritual
life after his time in prison:

> And I notice now that when I'm going to sleep, I'm . . . well, it may
> be childish, but anyhow, I usually say Holy Mary and I keep
> repeating that until I end up going to sleep. . . . That's something I
> would not have done before. (Grant, 2, 606–608)

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[78] "Ad Jesum per Mariam" (To Jesus through Mary) is a Marist motto that goes back to the
Founder. It has been very influential in the Marist spiritual tradition.
[79] *Water from the rock.* (2007). Marist Brothers: Rome.

Howard, who no longer believes in God and does not feel part of the Catholic Church, spoke about the network of people whom he knows and with whom he works as a volunteer: "And if that's my church, if that's my spirituality then I'm happy to say that, yes, I am still a spiritual person" (Howard, 3, 305–306).

There is a stark contrast between the participants' descriptions of their spiritual lives at the time when they were abusing children and how they described their spiritual lives at the time of the interviews. At the time of the abuse, they were working in schools and the Marist work ethic dictated the pace of their lives. Community prayers were "fitted in" where possible and personal prayer/meditation had stopped being a feature of their lives, with the exception of Bernard, who found ways to avoid confronting his abuse as part of his meditation. The participants speak about the place of personal prayer, spiritual practices, spiritual direction, and significant values such as community, sharing, gratitude, trust, peace, and acceptance as part of their spirituality today.

There is also a contrast in the way they speak about God, from the "God of Law," of their younger years, to a belief in a loving God who accepts them as they are. They were able to speak about how they managed to continue with their spiritual lives while in prison, and to undertake some kind of ministry to others. They have also found ways to continue to be of service to others either in the Marist community or as volunteers. They appear to have found ways to build meaningful lives based either on the rediscovery of old values, or the discovery of new values.

Tourangeau wrote that sense-making is "putting it all together" (2017, p. 111), and that:

> Sense-making for sexual offenders focused on personal and institutional healing, mercy, and reconciliation. They yearn to be part of the fold of their respective religious orders and dioceses and

to be seen and experienced as more than sex offenders. (2017, pp 124–125)

The participants in this study had to remake their spiritual lives and have worked to put the "broken" parts of their Marist lives and identities together (Dennis, Edward, Frank, Grant) or have had to create new ones (Andrew, Bernard, Christopher, Howard). They have had to reassess their relationship with the Marist Brothers and the Catholic Church, and with the theology they inherited but that did not always serve them well. Their current spiritualities reflect contemporary thinking and writing in the Marist Institute, which takes account of human weakness, vulnerability, and humanity, and which views brotherhood as a commitment to just and loving relationships, but which is different from the clericalised monastic model they were often taught in the past (Andrew, Dennis, Edward, Frank and Grant). In this way, they have demonstrated a commitment to the sense-making processes identified and described by Tourangeau (2017).

These findings offer support for Maruna's theory that he described in his book, *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives* (APA, 2001). The participants in this study may have found ways to move beyond the narrative of judgment and condemnation to build meaningful lives based on service and spirituality. This may not be true of all men who have committed sexual crimes against children, or indeed all Marist brothers or former brothers who have committed sexual crimes against children; but it emerges in the findings of this study which provides hope for the participants and for society. Three of the participants—Andrew, Frank, and Grant—reoffended after being moved to new locations, and Dennis reoffended against his victim when he invited him to a different location. One of the participants (Christopher) reoffended by digitally adjusting images on his computer, making use of a programme for working with photos and images. He did this 40 years after his contact offence. The adjustment of images was discovered when the police asked to see his computer, which led to arrest, trial, and imprisonment.

None of the participants (as far as I know) reoffended after the experience of discovery, trial, incarceration, and therapy. None were guilty of contact offences after the involvement of the statutory authorities. This data suggests that the experience of discovery followed by therapy—which provides opportunities to confront their past, their offending behaviour, and motivations to behave as they did, with the opportunity to integrate these experiences and feelings into their life narrative, which Tourangeau described as "sense-making"—can lead to positive outcomes for priests and brothers who have abused children.

Table 8-30
Human and Spiritual Growth after Discovery and Time in Prison: Summary.

	Factor	Participants who mentioned this factor
1	Growth in self-awareness	All
2	Experience of a loving God	A, B, C, D, E, F,
3	The importance of spirituality	B, D, E, F, G, H
4	Marist Spirituality	A, C, F
5	Spiritual values	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
6	Spiritual practices	A, B, C, D, E, F, G,
7	Spirituality while in prison	B, E, F, G, H
8	Ministry	B, D, E, F, G, H

8.6   Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings have been viewed through the lens of psychological research. Beginning with their experience of brotherhood, this chapter has:

- Explored the participants' sense of identity and belonging
- Explored some of the significant factors through the lens of psychological research

- Explored how the participants rebuilt their lives after the experience of discovery and incarceration and engaged in sense-making processes.

Psychological research in relation to attachment theory, intimacy deficits and loneliness, emotion regulation, and guilt and shame were presented and discussed, and applied to the findings. They have considerable explanatory value when attempting to understand the abuse of children by members of a religious order.

Four qualitative research studies on clerical offenders were summarized and discussed. There is considerable agreement regarding the factors that contributed to the abuse of children by priests and brothers. The similarity in the factors identified by these researchers supports the reliability and provides an element of validation for this research project.

The chapter concluded with Tourangeau's reflection on sense-making processes, illustrating how the participants were able to rebuild their lives after spending time in prison. Their spiritual lives before and after abuse were presented and contrasted, demonstrating from the findings that the participants found ways to rebuild their lives with a spiritual component that offered the possibility of living from "redemption scripts," trying to live "good lives," and of pursing a range of "human goods" in their lives.

In Chapter 9 I will summarise what has been learned from this research study and discuss the findings in the light of developments in the Marist Brothers. I will also make use of the concept of moral injury to reflect on the impact of the behaviour of the participants on their victims, others affected by the abuse, and their own lives.

CHAPTER 9
DISCUSSION

This research was undertaken in response to Brother Peter Carroll's stated intention "to investigate the factors concerning historical incidents of child sexual abuse" in the Marist Brothers in Australia. The findings from the interviews can be found in Chapters 5–8. Other aims were identified:

- To enable the voice of those who abused children to be heard, and to contribute to a better understanding of child sexual abuse (Chapters 5–8);
- To reflect on the sexual abuse of children, particularly from the perspective of brotherhood, and, in the case of the participants in this study, Marist brotherhood (Chapters 2, 3, 6, and 7);
- To examine Marist history and the importance given to the care and protection of children in the life and teachings of St Marcellin Champagnat (Chapter 2).

I hoped to show (Chapter 2) that brotherhood provides a valuable theological and ecclesial perspective for this study, presenting:

- Marcellin Champagnat's understanding of brotherhood;
- How the understanding and theology of brotherhood developed in the light of Vatican II (1962–65);
- An exploration of the "storehouse of collective memory" of the Marist Brothers in relation to the protection of children and the means used to support the brothers to live their life of chastity.

In this chapter, I will explore the experience of the participants from the perspective of moral injury, and then revisit the discussion about brotherhood (especially Marist brotherhood) and the protection of children, including a discussion of the limits of membership. I will reflect

on what the Marist Brothers can access from their storehouse of memory to find a positive way forward. This will include a review and discussion of the response of leadership to the growing awareness of the problem of child sexual abuse in the Marist Institute from 1985 until the present day.

Lastly, this research project aimed to look forward:

- To show how the theology of brotherhood, the Marist tradition of brotherhood, and current developments within the Marist Brothers and the Church might offer a way forward for a religious Order which has been deeply affected by the tragedy of child sexual abuse, offering valuable lessons for the future;
- That the experience of participating in the research, though difficult, might bring some healing to the participants;
- That the research might offer the Australian Marist brothers a platform for discussion and some healing of a topic which has brought shame and dishonour on their lives and work.

The chapter will end with a discussion of issues of reliability and validity, a summary of distinctive features of this research, and a statement about the limits of this research and possibilities for future research.

9.1 The Findings

This research confirms and builds on the model offered by McGlone and Sperry (2012), which suggests that a combination of individual, situational, and organisational factors best account for child sexual abuse by clergy. As shown in Chapter 3, clerical status (being a priest or a brother) did not emerge as a significant factor regarding propensity to abuse children. The analysis of the Australian and Scottish data showed that opportunity was a significant factor, as brothers who were members of clerical orders, who did not have access to children, had significantly

lower rates of offending than brothers or priests who worked in apostolates where they had access to children.

The review and analysis of prevalence data from research studies and commissions of inquiry (Chapter 3) supports the view that opportunity is a key factor in understanding abuse by priests and brothers. The authors of the John Jay study, for example, wrote that "vulnerabilities, in combination with situational stresses and opportunities, raise the risk of abuse" (2011, p. 118). The Deetman Commission (The Netherlands, 2011) noted that "children in residential institutions of education were vulnerable because there was greater opportunity" (Executive Summary, p. 9).[80] The French report identified pastoral situations which provided opportunities—often without adequate supervision—where abuse took place: parishes, schools, summer camps, or situations where a priest acted as a psychotherapist or spiritual guide (CIASE, 2021, Summary of Final Report, p. 8). The New Zealand Royal Commission noted that out of 1,680 allegations of sexual abuse, 687 related to educational facilities and 425 occurred in residential institutions (Te Rōpū Tautoko Fact Sheet, 2022, February, p. 1). However, opportunity on its own is not enough to account for abuse of children by priests and brothers, as the majority of clerics did not exploit pastoral or educational situations to abuse children. It is necessary to explore other factors which, when opportunities presented themselves, contributed to the abuse of children. A summary of the factors identified by the participants that they believe contributed to the abuse are presented on Table 9-31.

This research also identified some factors from Australian society and culture that may have been implicated in abuse by priests and brothers. These will be found at the end of Table 9-31.

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[80] See http://bishopaccountability.org/reports/2011_12_16_Deetman_Seksueel_Misbruik/Deetman_Report_English_Summary.pdf.

Table 9-31

Factors Identified in the Research that May Have Contributed to Abuse.

Area	Factor Grouping	Factor
Individual	Negative experience of Marist life	Humiliations Lack of support Adverse childhood events Delayed development Victim of sexual abuse in childhood
	Deficits	Lack of self-esteem Lack of sexual experience Lack of affection Poor boundaries Lack of self-regulation
	Unmet needs	Desire for touch/cuddling Desire for affection/relationship Desire for sexual contact/pleasure
	The process of the abuse	Victim initiative Grooming I couldn't stop/felt driven I knew it was wrong Uncomfortable feelings Alcohol
	Spiritual life	Lack of depth Perfunctory Fitting in spiritual exercises
	Rationalisations and minimisations	Exculpatory narratives
	Seeking help	Actual or avoided attempts to seek help

Situational	Boarding school as location of abuse
	Experience of conflict or stress
	Supervising boys in showers
Organisational	Attended juniorate
	Poor formation for religious life
	Inadequate formation for chastity
	Lack of adult relationships
	Marist work ethic
	Lack of professional training
	Poor leadership
	Abusers would not be dismissed
Formation, spirituality, and theology	Perfectionism
	Obedience
	Masturbation and mortal sin
	Homosexuality
Environmental factors	Homophobic culture in Australian society, including social mores and the law at that time
	Australian Catholic culture of respect for priests and brothers
	Culture of avoidance of talk about sex

9.1.1 Individual Factors

The following individual factors were identified by the participants and were discussed in Chapter 6: Adverse childhood experiences, delayed development, and having been a victim of sexual abuse. The participants identified a range of deficits which affected them: self-esteem, sexual knowledge, affection, and intimacy. They spoke about having: a poor

sense of boundaries, self-regulation difficulties, unmet needs including a desire for touch, affection/relationship with others, and sexual pleasure. They said that they felt driven, partly due to the Marist value of work which was operative in Marist schools and communities.[81] It was possible to identify a range of "exculpatory narratives" used by the participants to give themselves "permission" for the abuse. They also referred to the lack of depth in their spiritual lives and that they fulfilled religious duties where possible, but that there was little room for spiritual reading or development.

9.1.2 Situational Factors

Smallbone and Cale (2017) criticise the psychological approach to sexual offending theory for an overemphasis on the individual pathology of the offenders. Situational theory has two roots: rational choice theory (RCT) (Cornish and Clarke, 1986) and research in social psychology which highlights the important relationship between individuals and their immediate environments. RCT presents sex offenders as "purposive" decision-makers who seek to achieve specific ends, which for sex offenders may include sexual gratification, inappropriate intimacy, and relief from stress. The participants in this study spoke about their motivation in terms that are consistent with these three identified "ends:" their need for affection and relationship, a way to have relief from stress and conflict, and the pleasure experienced in sexual contact.

RCT proposes that men who offend undertake a cost-benefit analysis of their situation. The lower the level of risk of being caught, the existence of a strong possibility of reward, and a way of avoiding the feeling of guilt for violating personal standards, then the higher the likelihood of an

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[81] The negative impact of a reductionistic assessment of members of the Institute was discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. The *Rule of Life* (2020) addressed the issue of work and the need for balance in this contemporary statement of Marist life and spirituality: Beware of an activism that casts aside gospel values in favour of a self-seeking success. Your balanced approach to life sets an example for the children and young people entrusted to your care. (2020, #86).

offence being committed. The participants in this study agreed with the suggestion that their choice of younger victims (10–14 years of age) was partly influenced by the fact that younger boys were more trusting, less likely to reject their advances, and less likely to report their behaviour, making it less risky than attempts to engage with older youths (Chapter 3). They also said that they had not seen any brother who was dismissed for sexual abuse and believed that there would not be significant adverse consequences for them if their abuse was discovered or reported.

Situation theory highlights the importance of: opportunity, lack of supervision and accountability, the influence of conflict and stress (which are related to the situation in which the participants found themselves), the availability and use of alcohol, and access to boys in boarding schools. This includes the practice of supervising boys when they were taking showers, which was both challenging and a source of opportunity for some of the participants. The participants in this study all taught in schools and six worked in boarding colleges where there were opportunities to abuse boys (Chapter 7). The Report of the Marist Round Table discussion (Bland & West, 2017) acknowledged that the Marist Brothers' culture allowed for considerable autonomy with a lack of support and supervision (p. 32). Brother Peter Carroll said that whereas in the past the Brothers' lifestyle had been highly regimented with rules and practices that provided a high degree of supervision, these practices broke down in the late 1960s, which allowed for greater independence. Some brothers took advantage of this freedom to abuse children (Bland & West, 2017, p. 56).

9.1.3 Marist Organisation, Culture, and System

According to a report from the Safeguarding Unit of Farrer and Co, London, "organisational culture is a 'slippery concept'—often referred to but rarely defined" (Erooga et al., 2021, p. 1). I discussed the Marist Brothers as an organisation, a system, and a culture at the beginning of Chapter 7. I then explored the factors identified by the participants that

related to this aspect of abuse. These included: lack of safeguarding policies; failure to implement policies and rules about sexual contact with children; attendance at a Marist juniorate; poor formation for religious life, especially for the vow of celibacy; a lack of adult relationships; the influence of the Marist work ethic; often a lack of professional preparation for roles and responsibilities; poor leadership; and the practice of protecting and moving abusers.

The Marist culture promoted and taught specific spiritual values including the importance of religious obedience, and reflected the Catholic Church's teaching about masturbation, mortal sin, and homosexuality in its approach to formation and organisational culture. The spirituality that was taught until the 1970s was perfectionistic, allowing little room for human weakness, limitation, and error. These findings are consistent with research by Faulkner, Keenan, Winship and Tourangeau, which was presented in Chapter 8, and the findings of commissions of inquiry which were quoted in Chapter 7.

Three of the participants commented on the values and practices that were part of Australian society and the Australian Catholic Church during the time when they were growing to adulthood and when they abused children. Brother Peter Carroll referred to this culture in his reflections about the historical context and the culture of the Marist Brothers. He said that the Australian Catholic Church had a fortress mentality during much of the period under review (1950–2010), and that this was "shaped by the influence of the Irish in the Catholic Church." There was prudishness regarding sexual matters and "Victorian morals prevailed" (Bland & West, 2017, p. 52). The Church's moral theology was often experienced as limiting in unhealthy ways and oppressive, with a strong culture of control and fear of damnation, particularly in the area of sexuality.

In recent years there has been an interest in the impact of oppressive cultures and systems in moral thinking, and one of the outcomes has been the concept of moral injury, which identifies ways that individuals can be

damaged emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually by the way that leadership is exercised in specific cultures. I will now reflect on the experience of the victims and the participants in the light of this moral perspective.

9.2   Moral Injury[82]

The concept of moral injury was first identified by Dr Camillo Mac Bica, an American Vietnam War veteran and an academic philosopher. It was taken up and developed by Dr Jonathan Shay, a psychiatrist who worked with Vietnam veterans (Jamieson et al., 2020). Shay (2014) identified three characteristics of moral injury:

- A betrayal of what's right
- By someone who holds legitimate authority
- In a high-stakes situation.

Moral injury occurs when someone violates their own values, ethics, or ideals. It is similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but there are also differences. Shay suggests that the triggering events that lead to PTSD refer to threat of death or serious injury, but that moral injury results from acts that "violate deeply held moral values" (2014, p. 185). Where PTSD can result in fear, horror, helplessness, hypervigilance, and intrusive

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[82] Mescher (2023, p. 76) described moral injury as a "still developing concept." This can be seen in the range of vocabulary which is being used to attempt to capture the moral challenges faced by professionals in situations which deal with human suffering. Kenny (2006) wrote about moral distress, and Kenny et al. (2021) described situations of moral anguish which are encountered by health care professionals in the course of their work. Richardson, Lamson, and Hutto (2022), based on qualitative research with veterans, proposed the term "moral fracturing' to capture experiences of betrayal, moral ambivalence, "soul injuries," and lack of reconciliation. Hansen (2019) simplified Shay's criteria, described above, by identifying two dimensions of moral injury: the personal transgression of own's own moral values and the betrayal by "a person in leadership, of an ideal, or a cause." Lisa Tessman's 2005 book, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Ethics: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles,* is important in any discussion of moral injury, as is Renos Papadopoulos' edited collection (2020), *Moral Injury and Beyond*, especially Aristotle Papanikolaou's chapter entitled "What is moral about moral injury?" Brian Powers' article (2025), "No treaty with inhumanity: encountering lament and hope as humanising language in situations of moral evil*"*, brings the Biblical perspective of lament to the discussion of moral injury.

thoughts about the event, moral injury results in shame, guilt, and anger. Those who suffer from PTSD predominantly lose a sense of safety, whereas those who suffer from moral injury predominantly lose a sense of trust in individuals, leaders, and institutions. There is no universally accepted definition of moral injury and those who suffer from PTSD can also be described as suffering from moral injury. The characteristics of both overlap to some extent (Jamieson et al., 2020, p. 1052). Two important features of moral injury are the sense of betrayal and the threat to a person's deeply held beliefs and trust (Williamson et al., 2021, p. 453).

Moral injury was first applied to combatants in the Vietnam War and other situations of combat. It was then extended to police, journalists, veterinarians, front-line care staff (e.g. during the Covid pandemic), and first responders. These groups can all suffer as a result of exposure to traumatic events or may be asked to undertake actions by leaders that contravene their moral standards. They may commit acts that violate their own consciences. Such experiences can lead to an existential crisis (Williamson et al., 2021, p. 454).

Mescher expands the concept of moral injury to include "psychological trauma, emotional and embodied distress, disorientation to God and the good, diminished identity and agency, as well as damage to relationships and communities" (2023, p. 122). He describes the suffering inflicted on victims of clerical sexual abuse as a "sacred wound" and the abuse of children and its cover up as a "moral catastrophe" (2023, p. 123). He identifies the many ways that the betrayal impacted victims, bystanders, and other members of the Church. For victims it can include the loss of trust in clergy and the Church as an institution, and a sense of alienation and abandonment by God (2023, p. 124). The survivors who took part in the Marist Round Table discussion spoke about the "violation of trust, truth, and integrity" (2017, p. 17).

Mescher suggests that perpetrators of abuse might also be affected by moral injury. He asks, "How do we define a category for moral harm meant to encompass both perpetrators and victims, to say nothing of bystanders and other implicated subjects?" (Mescher, 2024, p. 129). This question reaches to the heart of this dissertation, which intentionally engaged with perpetrators to better understand the factors that contributed to abuse.

In Chapter 7, I explored the findings in relation to the Marist Brothers as an organisation, culture, and system, concluding that the participants were affected by factors that may have been implicated in their abuse. Andrew and Grant had the experience of not being listened to by the Provincial and felt discouraged by the lack of follow-up to their concern. Dennis described formation as a "trauma," and Frank felt that the Institute had "some blame" in his being an abuser. For Edward the absence of any formation for chastity, and the institutional infantilisation he experienced constituted neglect. Bernard learned that there would be no significant consequences if he was confronted for abuse of a child. Christopher described the working and living situation in a boarding school as "horrendous," and asked if there was a link between this situation and abuse. Howard spoke about the lack of any positive presentation about human sexuality, and Bernard, Dennis and Howard were all affected by the Church's theology and social judgment about homosexuality. Bernard and Howard experienced shame and self-hatred regarding their orientation. Howard concluded that his abusive behaviour was a direct result of the lack of integration of his sexual identity with being a Marist religious. These experiences and feelings can be understood from the perspective of moral injury as they led to feelings of shame and guilt, and a sense of betrayal by those in authority.

Some of these factors were identified in the conversations that took place as part of the Marist Round Table (Bland & West, 2017). The contributors identified the practice of obedience, the lack of preparation for teaching and other responsibilities, limited experience of and constrained sexuality,

often dealing with classes of 60 or more children, the expectation to be a good disciplinarian, and excessive expectations regarding work and responsibilities with little time for rest or adult relationships. Maria Harries concluded that to understand abuse it is necessary to "look beyond the psychopathology of individual abusers to the failure of the system to prevent abuse" (Bland & West, 2017, p. 29). She added that abuse was supported by a culture in which the brothers had power, children were vulnerable, abuse was possible, and the risk of detection was minimal (Bland & West, 2017, pp. 29–33).

Brother Peter Carroll reflected on the juniorate system which led some men to become highly compliant and immature. Some boys were victims of abuse in juniorates. As mentioned above, he also referred to the Irish culture which influenced the Australian Church and the Marist Brothers. There was a strong culture of control, fear of damnation and hell, and leaving religious life was seen as personal failure and shameful. He said that "the Marist Brothers existed within and were tainted by this prevailing culture" (Bland & West, 2017, p. 55).

Boys and their families put their trust in the Marist Brothers when they entered the juniorate and novitiate; and when men took a vow of obedience, they entrusted a significant amount of personal freedom to the religious superior. There were times when this trust was betrayed actively or through neglect. It is not difficult to understand why Frank's and Edward's therapists would help them to see that they too were victims of abuse.

That being said, Frank, who had already received an apology from a Provincial, raised the same issue with the succeeding Provincial:

> I just mentioned about the same sort of thing, about the brothers being responsible for part, and I mentioned about being taken away at 12, and he said, but not in an aggro way, "Well, everyone who went away at 12 didn't abuse." (Frank, 1, 691–696)

Frank had reflected on this and said, "Stupidly, I should've let that go" (Frank, 1, 686).

The Provincial's point is a fair one, that not everyone affected by these experiences went on to abuse children. People in the military are trained for combat and can experience moral injury in the exercise of the skills they have been taught. Other people, like police, first responders, journalists, and front-line carers, can experience moral injury as a result of betrayal by people in leadership, or exposure to incidents and situations that have a lasting effect on their emotional well-being. No one ever expected a Marist brother to abuse a child, and the training and formation—however imperfect—were designed to inculcate a set of values that cared for children. However, the impact of the system as a whole, as identified above and in Chapters 5 and 7, consistent with the various features identified by the participants in the Marist Round Table (2017), including the Provincial, and participants in this study can be seen to constitute moral injury for those who were affected by this culture and system.

Mescher (2023, pp. 133–134) concluded that moral injury affected the whole institution of the Church and therefore, by extension, the Marist Brothers. He refers to a "sinful ecclesial culture" and quoted Merton who wrote about the Church as a "body of broken bones" (1962, p. 56) which needs to be reset. This takes us to the next section of this discussion: the experience and theology of brotherhood, and how the Marist Brothers have learned from the limitations and "sinful structures" of the past to build a healthier future which seeks to be more consistent with their values.

9.3   Moral Injury and the Victims of Child Sexual Abuse

Mescher (2023) writes that moral injury was developed to try to capture the experience of inner anguish and conflict of people who experienced betrayal by those in positions of authority from whom they expected protection. I have discussed this in relation to the participants in this study who abused children. However, moral injury also relates to the experiences of the victims. As I said in Chapter 1, the victims were never far from my thoughts when undertaking this research. Before ending the interviews, I asked the participants what they would like to say to their victims, if they had the opportunity to do so.

> The first thing I would want to say to them is that . . . I wanted to satisfy myself by touching you, young people. And that was wrong. (Andrew, 7, p. 22, 26 – 32)

> I would probably ask them for compassion, not forgiveness. . . . It was a weakness in me, not in you. (Andrew, 7, p. 23, 46)

> I would say what I said at the first trial when I asked if I could speak to the court, which is the victims through the court, and very sincerely that I am totally, totally sorry for my abusive actions. I'm totally sorry for the damage I have done, that it was . . . it is . . . it was not right. It was totally wrong. And that I do hope that they can get on with their lives without this causing too much pain and damage for them in their lives. But I also said that "I don't believe I have the right to ask you to forgive me." (Bernard, 4, p. 23, 2–26)

> Sorry . . . for all the pain and everything I've caused you. Knowing that I can't change how they feel and what happened . . . there's a powerlessness about . . . I can't do anything else for it, just, you know . . . I wouldn't ask forgiveness because I think that's their

right to decide what they do. . . . I wouldn't be after that. It's more so I have a very, very deep regret (inaudible) for any pain I've caused others, yeah. (Christopher, 4, p. 24, 34–48)

I would want to say to the three of them that I'm responsible. . . . I was in a powerful position over you. . . . And you were in my charge. . . . I just hope that . . . your lives have gone okay, that you've taken all the support that's been offered by the Brothers. (Dennis, 4, p. 27, p. 25, 17–18)

I've endeavoured in each court case to express my sincere regret at what happened . . . it's with great sadness that I read about what I've done . . . so I would certainly want to apologise. (Edward, 4, p. 23, 44–51)

What I would say is I'm sorry. 'Cos they're human beings the same as I'm a human being, the same as the Brothers who have been invested with their own dignity and childhood of God. (Frank, 3, 18, 44–46)

First of all, sorry. I would probably want to make sure that he understood that it wasn't about him. That he was a victim who happened to be there at the time . . . targeted, not because he was different or special in any way but because the opportunity was there so it had nothing to do with him. . . . And really, I guess, for me to understand the pain that he's experienced in his life as a result of that . . . that I wish him the best and hope that his, his life has . . . been able to move on and he's got joy and someone to love in his life. (Howard, 4, 23; p. 24, 17)

The participants all recognise the pain they have caused. Andrew hopes for compassion, but none of them want to ask for forgiveness, knowing that this is something that cannot be expected from those whom they abused. Commenting on this point, Bernard said:

> If you say, "Oh please forgive me," well, you're basically
> putting them on the spot and they might not be at the time
> [able] to, to forgive, you know. Well, it might not just be
> the right time. It might never be the right time for them.
> (Bernard, 2, p. 23, 30–42)

> Howard said that his abusive behaviour "continues to haunt me day
> after day." (Howard, 2, 299–300)

I cannot expect that this research will bring healing to victims, but I hope it
can offer some understanding. I also hope that the knowledge that the
participants think of those whom they have hurt and abused and would like
to apologise for their behaviour goes some way towards a healing of the
wound they have experienced.

9.4   Brotherhood and the Protection of Children

Chinnici (2010, p. 12) approached the issue of the abuse of children and
the bonds of fraternity from his Augustinian–Franciscan tradition. In this
dissertation, I hoped to take the same approach with my own Marist
tradition.

As shown in Chapter 2, Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist
Brothers, was clear that there was no room in the Marist Brothers for the
physical punishment or abuse of children. I gave examples of practical
rules that he passed on to the brothers, and I quoted research that showed
that he offered formation and advice to the brothers on these issues during
summer training events that were held at the Hermitage, the central house
of the Marist Institute.

Ferrarini (2021) has shown that Champagnat's successors were very
concerned about the brothers' relations with children, and there is evidence

that abuse had happened in the early years of the Institute (Fr Avit, *Annales de L'Institut*, vols. *1–3*). The superiors made use of the wisdom and remedies available to them at that time. They promoted the value of fraternity, which should characterise the brothers' relations with children, while at the same time they supported and implemented a range of rules and policies designed to provide guardianship for children and supervision and accountability for the brothers.

Regarding support for their vow of chastity, the superiors relied on accompaniment of the brothers by superiors, including "manifestation of conscience" where they were asked to speak about their relations with students and their interior lives and desires until, in 1890, the Vatican restricted this practice to those who were ordained. The superiors encouraged vigilance, an attitude of personal sacrifice, and the practice of the *compte de conscience*, and promoted a range of spiritual and pious practices, especially prayer to Our Lady, to help the brothers during times of temptation.

This historical review reflects the belief that there are "resources in Catholic [and Marist] teaching and tradition that will help us to learn and change and act differently" (Jones et al., 2024, p. 138). However, the resources from the past are not enough. Psychological counselling, awareness of human development, and the place of sexual development were not available to the superiors before developments in psychology, anthropology, medicine, and therapy began to become part of religious life after the 1960s. The leadership of the Marist Brothers began to respond to the challenges that resulted from the abuse crisis, as well as continuing to improve the way that formation was offered for those who wished to become Marist brothers. These changes are reflected in official documents of the Marist Institute which will be explored later in this chapter.

9.4.1 The Response of the Leadership of the Marist Brothers

Brother Charles Howard, an Australian, was Superior General of the Marist Brothers from 1985–1993. He addressed the topic of the sexual abuse of children in a letter to Provincials (1990). Brother Charles noted how the culture had changed, and victims and parents were no longer prepared to take part in cover-ups of such incidents. He noted changes in the reporting laws in some countries, including requirements for mandatory reporting. In his concluding reflections, he wrote with candour:

> The first thing, brothers, is that we have to recognise that this problem really exists among some of our brothers. This is a forceful reminder of the need to give appropriate attention to the human formation of the brothers, having in mind the development of emotional and affective maturity. (Howard, 1990, p. 3)

He required Provincials to draw up a Province policy that would deal with the steps that needed to be taken if an allegation were made, procedures for responding to the victim and the abuser, and the provision of legal counsel for the brother and the Province, as well as arrangements for fraternal support and personal help for brothers against whom allegations had been made. While discharging his responsibilities toward the brother who had been accused, the Provincial also needed to ensure that there was an "objective search for the truth." He wrote, "Where a brother is guilty, we have a duty to follow up both parties, providing for both the victim and the brothers whatever help is possible and necessary."

Brother Charles returned to the theme of sexual abuse in February 1993, and repeated his requirement that every Province should prepare a policy on abuse. This was implemented in the English-speaking Provinces which were already having to deal with cases; but, for the most part, his

requirement was not implemented in parts of the Marist Institute which had not yet had to deal with cases of abuse.

Brother Charles' successors, Benito Arbués and Seán Sammon, wrote to Provincials about this topic (1995 and 2002), repeating Brother Charles' instructions regarding justice for victims and care and support for brothers who had been accused of abuse. If found guilty, they were to be offered ongoing therapy and support. It is perhaps unfortunate that these letters were not shared with the wider Institute which would have helped to raise awareness of this issue.

9.4.1.1 Brother Emili Turú (2009–2017)

A year after his election as Superior General in 2009, Brother Emili Turú established a working group to prepare guidelines to help Provincials to draw up child protection policies for their own Provinces. In March 2012, he called together the leaders of the Institute for a 10-day conference that was held in Rome. Marie Collins, a victim and well-known advocate for victims of sexual abuse, addressed the Conference during its second day. Her presentation had a significant impact in helping to change the attitude of the participants. By the time of the General Chapter that was held in September 2017, only one Province had failed to submit its safeguarding policy, which it did a few years later.

By the time of the 22nd General Chapter (2017) the issue of child sexual abuse was no longer confined to English-speaking Provinces. Brother Emili spoke about the sexual abuse of children in his address to the General Chapter on 29 September 2017. He began by describing sexual abuse as "a terrible form of violence against children and adolescents." He expressed great remorse for any abuse by Marist brothers and apologised to any children who had been failed by the Marist Brothers. He said that "we are trying to be, in one way or another, part of the solution to this social problem of enormous proportions" (Acts of the 22nd General Chapter, 2023, p. 147). Referring to Marist history, bearing in mind the

celebration of the bicentenary in 2017, he said, "We have all received a wonderful inheritance from 200 years of history, full of lights, but also with its shadows" (Acts, 2023, pp. 147–148). He proposed that the Institute should undertake an in-depth study of possible causes that gave rise to the abuse that happened. This research project is an attempt to contribute to such a study.

9.4.1.2 The XXII General Chapter (2017)

The 2017 General Chapter delegates approved a statement of apology to victims of sexual abuse by a majority of 70 out of 76 delegates (Acts, 2017, 160–161). The General Chapter also revised the Constitutions and Statutes of the Marist Institute and, for the first time, the topic of child sexual abuse was dealt with directly in these documents. The changes are found in paragraph 86:

> 86.1 The Provincial shall recommend to the Superior General the dismissal of any brother who is tried and convicted of sexual abuse. This includes convictions for producing, accessing, or disseminating images or materials of child abuse on the Internet. Where there are serious reasons that make the expulsion of the brother in question inadvisable, the Provincial must inform the Superior General.

> 86.2 Dismissal may also be appropriate for brothers who were tried and convicted of sexual abuse in the past. This will depend on the nature, the number and notoriety of the crimes, the level of contrition of the brother, and his commitment to live with the restrictions imposed on him.

> 86.3 For serious reasons, the Provincial with his Council may impose restrictions on a brother who has abused minors.

The new Constitutions stipulate that any Marist brother who is found guilty of child abuse or of making, downloading, or sharing child abusive images can be dismissed from the Institute. The General Chapter, based on the experience of Provincials who have had to deal with brothers who have abused and who remain members of the Province, also approved a list of sanctions that can be imposed on a brother who is found guilty of abuse.

9.4.2 The Marist Constitutions (2020)

The new Marist Constitutions (2017), which were given Vatican approval in 2020, build on the Marist storehouse of memory to raise awareness of the safeguarding of children, while providing the means necessary to make healthy living as a celibate Marist brother possible. "The well-being, safety, and protection of children and young people is a high priority" (4). Brothers are advised that "At times when loneliness weighs heavily on us, we rely on the sensitive support and encouragement of our brothers" (21) and "through personal accompaniment we seek appropriate help to grow in love and overcome our difficulties" (22). To help brothers to live celibate chastity "in a mature and balanced way," they are encouraged to "undertake psychological education and formation in the areas of sexuality, affectivity, and human relationships," and to benefit from counselling and spiritual direction. They are encouraged to live their relationships with "integrity, openness, honesty, and respect" (23), and are advised to be careful when showing affection to ensure that the freedom and dignity of others is respected. This requires formation in the area of boundaries, something that was lacking for the participants in this study. In article 29 of the new Constitutions, each Administrative Unit is mandated to have a safeguarding policy which, among other things, requires that victims will be treated with compassion, justice, and dignity.

9.4.2.1   *Obedience*

The Constitutions of 1985 continued to speak about superiors "who act in the place of God when they command in accordance with the Constitutions" (1985, #37). The vow of obedience, and the theology and practice which supported it, were identified as a factor that contributed to the culture in which abuse took place. The Constitutions of 2020 refer to authority as service, and the importance of listening and fraternal dialogue (2020, #87 and *#142)*.

9.4.3 Brother Ernesto Sánchez Barba (Elected in 2017)

In his circular *Homes of Light* (8 September 2020, p. 96), Brother Ernesto became the first Superior General to directly address the issue of the abuse of children in a circular:[83]

> We grieve over the painful cases of child abuse or our lack of due care for children. . . . There are so many cases, so many wounds that inflict us.

Brother Ernesto appointed a member of the General Council as his Safeguarding Delegate and established an International Commission on Child Safeguarding which comprises brothers and lay men and women from different parts of the Marist Institute. In 2021 the General Council published new guidelines to assist in the preparation and updating of child protection policies and procedures. This revised set of guidelines reinstates the prohibition against physical punishment, which was part of the Common Rules of 1960, but which had not been repeated in official documents since that time.[84]

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[83] Br Emili Turú, in a circular of 6 June 2016, wrote about discussing complicated topics with a number of Provincials, including "cases of sexual abuse" (Turú, 2017, p. 232).
[84] *Standards for Safeguarding Children.* (31 January 2020). Marist Brothers: Rome.

> Physical (corporal) punishment, the use of humiliating or degrading language, or other such ways of dealing with minors, are prohibited. (Standard 2)

With the restatement of this prohibition, the Marist tradition and history regarding the abuse of children comes full circle, returning to the experience of a 10-year-old boy in France in 1799 who was appalled when he saw a teacher strike a child unjustly.

9.4.4 Draft Formation Guide (2024)

The participants (especially those who were in formation in the late 1950s and 1960s) were critical of their experience of formation, and the three men who experienced formation in the 1970s and 1980s, while they had positive experiences, regretted the absence of a more open and practical discussion of sex, sexuality, and the vow of celibacy. The current Draft Formation Guide entitled "Called to be with him and be sent: Our journey as brothers" (2024) attempts to address some of the concerns about formation. For example, there is recognition that the Marist vocation extends beyond the vowed members of the Institute:

> Over the years the embodiment of this charism has evolved to give better witness to this God of communion, so what began as a group of religious brothers now is a global family of women and men, lay people and lay brothers. (p. 11)

It also removes the unhealthy separation of the brothers' humanity from their spiritual lives and states that "our first vocation is a call to be human among humans" (p. 14). This, hopefully, undermines any sense of entitlement or of being special which was also a factor that contributed to the abuse of children by priests and brothers. There is a recognition of the need for "people of reference" with whom those who wish to join the Marist Brothers can discuss in open and sincere dialogue the decision they

are contemplating (p. 17). The document provides a list of attitudes that should be dealt with as part of formation, many of which are positive responses to the deficits of the past (p. 38):

1. Balanced attitude towards power, possessions, and pleasure;
2. Self-knowledge, emotional balance, and self-care;
3. Healthy self-discipline and a good sense of responsibility;
4. Self-esteem, healthy sense of self, creativity, and initiative;
5. Capacity for self-transcendence and resilience;
6. Competencies and skills, intercultural attitude, and respect and appreciation of one's own culture;
7. Healthy relationship with the biological family;
8. Healthy and balanced relationships;
9. Respect for the dignity of others, care, and protection of minors;
10. Respect and care for our common home;
11. Integrated and balanced sex life, sexuality, and affectivity.

Candidates are asked to have a balanced attitude to the human experience of pleasure (1), which in the past was treated with suspicion and fear. Perhaps most importantly, there is acknowledgement of the issue of sexual orientation (11, p. 41):

We become aware, accept and integrate sexual history, orientation, and identity. This will help us to live a balanced consecrated life among the brothers and especially with children and young people.

Healthy relationship and experiences with both men and women help us discover, integrate, and grow into the true sexual self.

These paragraphs reflect a long journey of awareness and maturity on the part of the Marist Institute with an implicit recognition and acceptance that "orientation" is not restricted to being heterosexual. Candidates are encouraged to become aware of their orientation, be able to discuss and

explore it in a way that is safe and respectful, and to integrate this knowledge into their "sexual self."

The Cross of the Moment (Jones et al., 2024, p. 79) listed a range of factors that had led to a change in the culture of formation in religious orders in England and Wales that are consistent with the changes that have taken place in the Marist Brothers:

- Changes in theology of religious life following Vatican II
- Making use of insights from developmental psychology
- Increasing age of those who aspire to enter religious life
- Fewer people asking to enter religious life.

9.5   A New Theology and Vision of Brotherhood

The Biblical image to "enlarge the space of our tent" (Is. 54:2) has been referenced to expand Marist life to include lay people as part of the Marist educational community. Chinnici (2010, p. 39–40) saw the move to involve lay people, especially women and professionals, in the work of safeguarding, as a development of the Franciscan theology of fraternity for today. The same is true for the Marist Brothers. In the next section of this chapter, I will show how the thinking about brotherhood continued to change and develop in the Church and in the Marist Brothers. This development was timely when the Marist Brothers were confronted with the need for changes as a result of what was learned about sexual abuse by members of the Order.

9.5.1 Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church (2015)

It appears that the Superior General of the St John of God Brothers challenged Pope Benedict XVI (2005–2013) saying that he was in danger of presiding over the demise of the vocation of brothers in the Church.

This led to the creation of a commission in 2008[85] to prepare a document about the identity and mission of the religious brother in the Church. For a number of years, the writing of the document appeared to be stalled. McElwee (2015, December 14) said that this was due to disagreements regarding how the vocation of the religious brother would be explained in relation to the role and identity of priests. The matter was raised with Pope Francis after his election (2013) and it was discovered that the drafting committee wanted to make use of *communio* theology in the document, to highlight the fraternal and community nature of the mission and identity of brothers, and that this met with resistance from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. As a result of Pope Francis' intervention, the writing group was reconvened and the document was published on 4 October 2015.[86]

Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church (2015) was published by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The document is rooted in the New Testament and draws from a range of theological sources, demonstrating the significant developments in the understanding of the role and identity of the religious brother in the years since Vatican II (Chapter 2). The document is situated in an ecclesiology of communion (3) and begins by reflecting on the vocation of the religious brother within the Church-Communion (4), drawing on the theology of covenant (5) and highlighting the relationship of communion with the people of God (6).

The second part of the document reflects on the identity of the religious brother, and is divided into three parts:

1. The Mystery: Brotherhood, we receive;
2. Communion: Brotherhood, the gift we share;

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[85] See https://www.augustinian.org/news/2015/12/14/new-vatican-document-on-identity-and-mission-of-religious-brothers. Accessed 20 February 2024.

[86] This background was shared by Brother José Maria Ferre, FMS, as part of a workshop presentation on 31 March 2017 in Vallender, Germany.

3. The Mission: Brotherhood, the gift we give away.

This document moves significantly beyond the semi-monastic view of brotherhood of the "long nineteenth century" (O'Malley, 2008, pp. 53–92) and any sense of brothers being "second-rate" priests" (9). The document situates the identity of the brother in his relationship with God, with the Church, with his own brothers in community, and in solidarity with the poor and those on the margins of society. The text quotes Matthew 25: "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do unto me" (27), and notes that he is called to "build brotherhood" (18) among others, echoing the calls of *Gaudium et Spes*. Brothers are called to the peripheries of the world in situations "marked by migration, hunger, injustice."

Brothers are presented as men who "seek and point to God in the secular realities of culture, science, human health, the workplace, the care of the weak and disadvantaged." Brother Charles Howard referred to St John Chrysostom who apparently spoke about "the sacrament of being brother." This may be an adaptation of St John Chrysostom's observation that "the love of neighbour is a sacrament."[87] This insight is reflected in paragraph 19 of the document:

> The brother is called to live this incarnated and unifying spirituality which facilitates encounter with God, not only by listening to the Word, in the sacraments, the liturgy, and in prayer, but also in everyday life, in all his daily tasks, in world history, in the ongoing human enterprise, in material reality, in work and technology. . . . It is about bringing all of life to prayer and ensuring that prayer continues in life.

This vision of a sacramental identity, hallowing the world and being open to significant encounters in life, is a significant development from the

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[87] See https://issuu.com/jacobswell/docs/jw_issue_3_07.03.20/s/10724109. Accessed 20 February 2024.

semi-monastic theology which feared the world, and which created rules and community structures to prevent contact with the secular world.

The document concludes with a section entitled "Being Brothers today: A story of grace," noting that consecrated life (of men and women) is a gift of God to the Church. In a section entitled "Who is my brother?" we read (33):

> There are many more faces waiting for the Good Samaritan to approach them, to be their brother and to give them life. . . . They are inviting religious brothers today, whatever their age, to compose a story of grace, to live with passion for Christ and for humanity.

This poetic language demonstrates the journey that the theology of brotherhood has undergone in the years since the Vatican Council. The call to live with passion for Christ and humanity echoes *Gaudium et Spes* and demonstrates the extent to which the renewed thinking and language of the Council found its way into the understanding of the identity and role of brothers in the Church.

9.5.2 Wherever You Go: The Marist Brothers Rule of Life (June 2021)

The challenge of restating the identity of Marist brothers led to the writing and publication of *Wherever you go: The Marist Brothers rule of life* (June 2021). The structure of the text follows the structure of *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*. It begins with an Invitation which states unequivocally that "there is great value in being a brother today." This document does not provide a definition of the vocation of a Marist brother and eschews canonical language in its presentation of Marist brotherhood. It begins by saying that "your call to brotherhood contains an element of mystery: accept it as a gift."

The Marist Brothers' Rule of Life situates the brother's vocation in the "experience of meeting and being with Jesus" (2) from which all else flows. It is a call to live this vocation in community (3) and to "bear witness to the fact that, as children of the same Father, we are brothers and sisters to one another" (5), especially those "who are dispossessed or marginalised' (73), remembering that their "primary mission is to be a brother and to promote brotherhood" (71).

9.5.3 Gathered Around the Same Table

When Marcellin Champagnat lived with his young recruits in La Valla (1817–1825), he built a table which could be used as a dining table, for prayer and study, and for recreation and conversation. Remarkably, this simple table has survived and in recent years it has been adopted as a symbol of the expanded Marist community which involves lay people as well as brothers. In September 2019, the Marist Brothers published a document written by a team of brothers and lay people and entitled *Gathered Around the Same Table*. In the introduction, Brother Seán Sammon, SG, wrote (2009, pp. 17–18):

> The image and the experience of the shared table is the great
> symbol that Jesus used to explain the Kingdom of God. The table
> of the Eucharist gathers us around Him and makes Him present
> still, after two thousand years. In a similar way, the simple table at
> La Valla represents for us Marists the beginning of our vocation.
> Brothers and sisters around the same table, we share work, prayer,
> and fraternity; as at the table of our families, we come together to
> celebrate our life in common.

The La Valla table takes us back to the New Testament and Jesus' practice of table commensality, the radical invitation to all people to sit at the same table in a spirit of fraternity (Chapter 2). This vision, and its contemporary

Marist expression, is a final perspective we can bring to the subject of the sexual abuse of children by Marist brothers. It offers a way forward, restoring the centrality of the value of brotherhood and expanding it to include lay men and women who can be partners in promoting the safeguarding of children and the implementation of policies, which is faithful to the Gospel and to the Marist educational and spiritual tradition.

Figure 9-5
La Valla Table.

9.5.4 The Limits of Membership

While it is true that brotherhood is fundamentally about inclusivity (as shown above), the journey that the Marist Institute has travelled as a result of the abuse crisis has led it to the conclusion that not everyone can sit around the same table as members of the Marist Institute. The Institute has learned that vowed membership of the Marist Brothers has limits, and that is reflected in the Statutes approved in 2017, which were presented above.

This has been part of the process of painful learning for a group which prizes and promotes brotherhood, solidarity, and inclusivity as part of its identity. The idealistic description of the Christian community that we find in Acts 4:32–35, is followed three verses later with the deception and betrayal (and deaths) of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). The insertion of this incident in the early story of the young Christian community is a reminder of human fallibility, and that all groups need to put boundaries around membership and the benefits of belonging.

The growing awareness of the problem of child sexual abuse in all parts of the Institute, and changes in canon law, led to a re-evaluation of the policy of allowing brothers to remain in the Institute. The "storehouse of Marist memory" demonstrated that the founder dismissed aspirants who had been guilty of the abuse of children and that this was the practice in France in the 19th century. Ferrarini (2021, p. 54), wrote about Brother Louis-Marie (Superior General from 1860–1879): "He was drastic and said that immediate exclusion from the Institute is and must be the immediate consequence of any ostentatious misconduct in the area of sexuality."

As we saw in Chapters 5 and 7, there are very strong bonds of loyalty and belonging for members of the Marist Institute (as with other religious orders). Where there is evidence that brothers who abused children while in annual profession were not allowed to renew their vows the following year (Chapter 7, footnote 71), there are, to my knowledge, few examples in the 20th century of brothers in final profession being dismissed from the Institute for the abuse of children.

The growing awareness of the extent of abuse by priests and brothers and the devastating impact abuse has had on victims, their families, the brothers themselves, and the credibility of the Institute led to a re-evaluation of how to respond to those who abuse. The outcome of these reflections led to changes in the Constitutions and Statutes (2017), and the decision to dismiss any brother found guilty of abuse after that date. The

XXII General Chapter (2017) also made provision for the dismissal of a brother who had abused in the past, depending on certain conditions.

The bonds of brotherhood continue, however, and the two former brothers who participated in this study and who left the Marist Institute spoke warmly of the support they experienced before and after they left. The two former brothers who were dismissed spoke with gratitude about the support they receive. One of them wrote in an email on 16 April 2024:

> I had a major medical incident and had to be hospitalised for a month. As a result, I have long-term things that will not improve. . . . I am now in a nursing home. . . . The Marist Care Assistant . . . has been amazing in her help and care of me.

One of the Australian brothers has responsibility to keep contact with any brothers who are serving time in prison and with their families, and to co-ordinate visits from brothers. He also (along with others) maintains contact with former brothers who wish to do so.

The result of the experience of dealing with abuse, reflection on Marist history, and changes in society and canon law have led to a change in the way that brotherhood is extended to those who abused. Those who remain as brothers receive support and continue to live, with restrictions and supervision, in communities. Those who have left or who have been dismissed receive contact and care where it is welcome or required.

9.6   Understanding and Healing

While revisiting shameful experiences from the past would be painful and unsettling for the participants, I hoped that the experience of reflecting and sharing about these incidents might also be a source of personal growth and healing. The participants expressed various fears and anxieties at the beginning of the interview process. At the end of the interviews in

February 2020 and October 2022, I asked them about their experience of participating in the interviews. They replied as follows:

> I can say it's been one of the most pleasant days I've had for a long time. (Andrew, 6, 11)

> I find . . . that it helps me, not only to understand myself . . . but also to reinforce my acceptance of myself. . . . Because it's in understanding myself that keeps me from going back to the dark place of self-hatred. . . . I benefit from it as well. (Bernard, 3, 815–831)

> There's none of it with which I'm uncomfortable. It's not raised any negative issues in me at all. I've been through this material a lot of times by myself and with therapists and so forth to deal with it. . . . I'm really glad this is happening. (Dennis, 3, 681–685, 749)

> It's been demanding . . . but very valuable . . . in that I've come to clarify with your assistance . . . something of what's happened in my life. (Edward, 4, p. 24, 43–52)

> This has been a regurgitating but it's a positive . . . and I accepted it and I'm glad I did. . . . I believe that the results of the study would help lots of different people so in that sense I was prepared to undergo some difficulties or hardships to have that happen. . . . And it has been . . . growth-giving for me. (Frank, 2, 788, 3, 24)

> I think it is relief that I have looked at it. . . . I didn't think I'd talk as much as this. I thought you'd have to drive . . . the answers out. (Grant, 2, 462, 1165–6)

> It's been a great honour. . . . It's meant that I've been able to . . . continue to learn about myself. It's meant a lot to me to be able to contribute to the body of research. . . . Reading the two chapters

> that you . . . provided . . . has given me more insight into myself;
> but it's also been able to give me . . . benchmark is not the right
> word, but to see and read about the other seven men . . . and their
> stories . . . it's been a really important aspect of my life. (Howard,
> 4, 9, p. 24; 52, pp. 26, 21)

The participants used a range of positive words to describe the experience
of the interviews: self-understanding, acceptance of self, benefiting,
feeling glad, valuable, clarifying, growth-giving, a relief, a great honour,
insight, an important aspect of my life. Three said that they were glad that
they were able to contribute to research that would provide more
understanding. These reflections indicate that the aim of contributing to
the process of growth and healing of the participants has been achieved
This also supports the discussion at the end of Chapter 8 about supporting
former offenders to live good lives, and that those who are able to live
from redemption scripts are more likely to desist from future offences and
make a positive contribution to society and to those who are part of their
lives.

A further stated aim was to offer a platform for discussion and provide
some healing for the Australian Marist brothers. I was able to share the
findings with three groups of Australian brothers and a group of Marist
brothers in New Zealand in October–November 2022. After one of the
presentations, a member of the Provincial Council said, "This is a
conversation that we have needed to have." Rather than give a lecture-style
presentation, I asked the brothers to identify questions they would like to
ask those who participated. After making a list of their questions, I then
proceeded to share the findings that related to their questions. In this way
the presentations focused on their specific interests, and the brothers were
indirectly able, almost by proxy, to ask questions of the men who abused,
to help them to understand how this could ever have happened in the
Marist Provinces of Australia (and New Zealand).

9.7 *Coda: Fratelli Tutti* (2020)

In his Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis puts brotherhood at the heart of his renewal project for the Catholic Church, returning the Church to the Gospel tradition of brotherhood (Chapter 2), as the foundation of his vision for a renewed humanity.

> Francis (of Assisi) felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea, the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh. Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm, and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters. (2)

In this short extract we can hear Pope Francis' care for our common home, his commitment to peace and reconciliation, and his desire to be present with those who suffer in any way. Victims of child sexual abuse are among those who were often abandoned in the Church, and perpetrators are certainly among those who are or can feel outcast in Church and society. This short passage brings us back to some of the central issues of this research project: how could those who, like St Francis, chose to live a consecrated life to help those who were in need, then be the source of pain and suffering to others, and how can a group of men dedicated to the values of brotherhood respond to members of their religious family when they behave in this way? I hope that this dissertation has continued the process of providing answers to these questions, however tentatively, building on the work of others who have asked these questions.

The Marist Brothers aspire to live a life of fraternity with all people and with our common home. They do this by building on the tradition established by Marcellin Champagnat which explicitly sought to educate children with an ethic based on love, and which avoided any kind of physical punishment or abuse. Sadly, the history of the Marist Brothers contains episodes where these ideals were not lived in practice. The Marist

Constitutions of 2020, along with other recent documents, indicate that the Marist Brothers wish to follow a path that reclaims the values of their founder and make use of a revised, biblically based, theologically mature understanding of brotherhood which acknowledges the need for safeguarding, intentionally expands Marist life to include lay men and women, and orients itself to the world as a place to share their brotherhood with others.

Pope Francis' call to walk alongside the abandoned, outcasts etc. is a call to heal the wounded and to repair what has been broken, which returns us to the title of this dissertation. Abuse has led to a great deal of brokenness for victims, the Marist Brothers, the Church, and the perpetrators. The interview process and the sharing of the research appears to have contributed to some healing for the participants and the Marist Brothers in Australia. While this research project may not have directly helped to heal the brokenness of those who were victims, hopefully it provides valuable information for the Marist Institute that can help to prevent abuse—and more victims—in the future.

9.8   Reliability and Validity

In order to demonstrate reliability, it is important to show that the research is plausible and accurate, and that it has been undertaken with rigour, with an audit trail etc. These aspects can be demonstrated in this research project. But perhaps more importantly, the consistency of the participants' narratives which were recorded in February 2020 and October 2022 offer support for the reliability of the findings.

Tracy (2010) wrote that demonstrating the excellency of the research was a way to demonstrate validity. She also highlighted the importance of the selection of a worthy topic, rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance (the meaning of the study extends beyond this sample), that the research makes a significant contribution to learning in this area, and that it has ethical

coherence. The results of this study are of interest to the Marist Brothers in Australia and in other parts of the Marist world. They will be of interest to other religious orders and for researchers who are interested in the sexual abuse of children by priests and brothers. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of the Australian Royal Commission (2017), the Dutch, German, French, and American investigations, and the research by Faulkner, Keenan, Winship, and Tourangeau. This level of consistency helps to establish and support the reliability and validity of the findings.

9.9   Distinctive Features

This research project has a number of distinctive features:

- It is, to my knowledge, the first academic and methodologically rigorous study with a group of brothers who abused children and not with a mixed group of priests and brothers.
- The participants in this study were all members of the same religious order and were from the same country and culture.
- A tentative exploration is offered of the available data regarding the prevalence of abuse by brothers.
- Contrasting sexual and non-sexual offenders with characteristics of clerical offenders is provided (Appendix 7).
- Review and discussion of available qualitative research with priests and brothers who abused children is included.
- There is a discussion of the relationship between homosexual orientation and the abuse of boys by clerics, based on the currently available research data.
- Building on Mescher (2023), moral injury is applied as a theoretical perspective which encompasses all who are affected by the tragedy of clerical abuse.
- There is a reflection on the limits of membership.

9.10 Limitations of this Research

This research was undertaken with four Marist brothers and four former Marist brothers. While this is sufficient for this kind of research project, it is not a completely representative sample of the range of Marist brothers who abused children. Some of the descriptions of abuse that were shared as part of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, for example, involved aspects of manipulation and coercion (beyond the kind of exploitation discussed in this research), as well as violence, which were not features of the abuse of children as described by the participants in this study. This research reflects the abuse that was committed by four Marist brothers and four former Marist brothers in one country (Australia), and was therefore limited in terms of language, culture, age, and ethnicity.

In order to have a better understanding of child sexual abuse in the Marist Brothers as an international Institute, it would be necessary to undertake research with brothers who have abused from different language groups, countries, and ethnicities. Given the developments in the internet and social media, a research project which focused on brothers who have been found guilty of online offences would be a further step in helping the Marist Institute to understand this disturbing phenomenon. The Australian, Scottish, and New Zealand commissions of inquiry, as well as state and Church audits in other countries, have resulted in an expansion in our knowledge about abuse by Marist brothers. It would be useful to find a way to bring the results of these various commission of inquiry and audits together to respond to the proposal of Brother Emili Turú (Acts, 2023, p. 149) to initiate a study of possible causes of abuse in the Marist Institute. It would also be valuable if other religious orders and dioceses could undertake similar research projects to expand our knowledge of the causes of sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church by priests and brothers.

9.11 Conclusion and Summary

In this chapter I have revisited the stated aims of this research project as identified in Chapter 1 to demonstrate how these aims were met in the research:

- Summary of the findings;
- Discussion of moral injury;
- Reflection on the Marist storehouse of memory;
- How the Marist Institute has learned lessons from the past and benefited from developments in psychology and theology to present a healthier vision of brotherhood and to promote the safety and protection of children;
- Review of developments in the understanding of brotherhood as a vocation, ending with Pope Francis' vision of brotherhood (2020) as a positive way forward for the Church and the world.

The chapter ended with a discussion of issues related to reliability and validity, a summary of the distinctive features of this research project, a reflection on the limits of the research, and possible avenues for further research.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:   Ethics Approval

After receiving the response to the Ethics Application from Dr James Simpson on 9 January 2020, I received a further response from the School of Critical Studies Ethics Committee, which raised the following issues that needed to be addressed:

1. Standards of encryption (Appendix 2);
2. Will any research data be transferred outside of the European Union (EU)? (Appendix 2).
3. Security and privacy issues (Appendix 2);
4. Audio security (Appendix 2);
5. Transcription process (Appendix 2);
6. Potential conflict of interest (Chapter 3: Methodology);
7. Confidentiality and safeguarding (Appendix 4);
8. Data management/retention (Appendix 2);
9. University of Glasgow contacts on Participant Information letter (Appendices 3–5);
10. Supervisory arrangements (Appendices 3–5);
11. Arrangements for individual/counselling support (Appendices 3–5);
12. Security of recordings and preparation of transcripts (Appendix 2);
13. The right to withdraw (Appendices 3–5).

I then undertook the following tasks:

- I contacted AVR Transcription Limited, and received the information required about transcription and security.
- I contacted Brother Peter Carroll, Provincial of the Marist Brothers in Australia, who provided information about the

> Safeguarding Policies of the Marist Brothers in Australia and confirmed that arrangements were in place for counselling and individual support in the event of any participant feeling distressed as a result of the interview process.
>
> - Preparation of a document addressing concerns raised about conflict of interest.
> - Revision of the Consent form, the Interview Questionnaire, the Recording Agreement, Participant Information Sheet, and the Letter to Participants.

These documents were sent on 27 January 2020.

On 28 January 2020, Dr Simpson wrote to me as follows:

> If you have revised the participant letter in accordance with the feedback included in the response to your application, you may send it to participants.

In the light of Dr Simpson's email of 28 January, I sent the letters to the participants on 29 January 2020.

Appendix 2:   Response to Data Security Requirements

Issue	Observations/Requirements	Information/Action
Encryption	Consult Arts IT Support for guidance (either via email or visit in person). In this instance, all devices and files should be encrypted to current standards.	I am in discussion with IT support services regarding encryption. Drew Lynch of IT support was contacted on 23 January 2020. The email was copied to Dr James Simpson and Julie Clague. A second email was sent to arts-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk on 24 January which resulted in a response from Dr James Simpson indicating: that AVR Transcription Limited appears to conform to the standards and policies of the university, that it appears that I have demonstrated how to comply with appropriate encryption practices and standards, and that I am able to put these into practice. All recordings and transcripts will be uploaded to Egress, where all content is encrypted in transit and at rest using AES256-bit encryption in fully accredited data centres. It is worth noting that, according to the director of AVR Transcription Limited, the password requirements for the Egress workspace exceed the requirements detailed in the

		University Password Policy.
Data transfer outside EU	Will any research data be transferred/stored outside the EU?	No research data will be stored outside of the EU.
Security and privacy issues associated with transferring transcripts	Email is not sufficiently secure, so an appropriate means must be specified. See University of Glasgow guidance re file-sharing and confidentiality: • https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/it/filesharing/ • https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_477731_smxx.pdf • https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/it/informationsecurity/confidentialdata/ OneDrive or the university's File Transfer Service would be the most secure means. IT support advises that files should be encrypted first.	The data will be transferred to the transcription service through a secure link via the web site of AVR Transcription Limited. The director and the principal researcher will have access to this system and the principal researcher has a dedicated access point.
Specifics of audio security	Is the Dictaphone a digital recorder? If so, at what point will files be transferred to a secure environment? When will files be deleted from the Dictaphone? (Preferably before leaving Australia: travel presents particular risks with regard to portable devices.)	I have been advised to use my Apple computer and iPhone digital recorders for recording. The recordings will be uploaded to the transcription service via a dedicated link. The files will be transferred to a secure environment each day after the recordings have been made. The files will be deleted from my iPhone and computer before I leave Australia.
Transcrip-tion process	If the interviews are being transcribed by a third party, details are also needed for the transcription service and security protocols in place there.	The files will be transcribed by AVR Transcription Limited, which does this work for the U.K. security services, the Home Office, the police and the courts, and which has the highest standards of security clearance:

		www.avrtranscriptionltd.co.uk.

Appendix 3:   Letter to Participants

<div align="right">

Department of Theology and Religious Studies,

4 The Square,

University of Glasgow,

G12 8QQ

xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk

25 January 2020

</div>

Dear . . . . . .,

My name is Brother Brendan Geary. I am a member of the Province of West Central Europe and was Provincial from 2010–2019. I am currently living in Glasgow. I am a registered Clinical and Counselling Psychologist in the United Kingdom.

Background to this proposed study

In 2016 I learned that Brother Peter Carroll had informed the Royal Commission in Australia that he wanted to undertake research to help the Brothers in Australia to understand how the sexual abuse of children had happened among Marist Brothers in Australia. He wrote in his Witness Statement to the Australian Royal Commission of 17 October 2017:

> Research Project: To enhance the Marist Brothers' understanding of what happened in the past and to ensure that those events are not repeated, we have initiated a research project to investigate the factors concerning historical incidents of child sexual abuse.

I wrote to encourage Brother Peter to undertake this important research. As part of any research project in this area, I believe that it is important to hear from those who abused in order to help us to understand another facet of the complex issue of child sexual abuse.

After I completed my term as Provincial, I decided to continue to work in the area of safeguarding awareness and human development training. I proposed to Brother Peter that I might undertake this part of the research on his behalf. He consulted the Provincial Council and they encouraged me to proceed. I gather that Brother Peter contacted you after this decision to ask if you would be open to participate in such a study.

I have decided to undertake a research degree at Glasgow University for a number of reasons. In the first place, I want to ensure that any research that I undertake will be done with the academic rigour that would be expected of a university. Also, I want to ensure that anything I do has ethical approval, and that I make use of a recognised methodology when I begin the research. Glasgow University, as you would expect, takes research with human subjects very seriously and has a number of protocols and requirements for anyone embarking on this kind of research. This includes the University's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into force in the European Union in 2018. The GDPR has had a significant impact on the recording, storage, and processing of all personal data across the European Union and is particularly important when a researcher wishes to undertake research on sensitive subjects where there is any perceived risk to the participants. One of my reasons for undertaking this project as part of a university degree is to ensure the highest level of academic rigour and security, as well as personal protection for you and the other participants who have responded to my request to participate in this study.

I have proposed the following study, which has been approved after careful scrutiny by the University's Ethics Committee, involving the Ethics representatives of the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the University's Safeguarding Officer:

Title: Self-understandings of RC Brothers who have Abused Children.

Supervisor: Julie Clague.

A qualitative analysis of interviews with Australian Marist brothers and former Marist brothers who have been found guilty of the sexual abuse of children, to explore their understandings of how they make sense of their abusive behaviour when they look back on their lives.

This research project seeks to address the issue of the sexual abuse of children by members of a Roman Catholic religious order of brothers which is dedicated to the education and well-being of children. The research will be based on individual interviews with men who have freely agreed to participate in this project with a member of their own religious order, who has worked as a therapist with victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse, has conducted research on sexual abuse, and who has worked in this area in a range of roles over a period of 18 years.

This question is important and worth investigating as it will help the Marist Brothers and the wider Church, especially in Australia, to understand better the individual motivations, desires, needs, and ways of thinking and acting that led to this abusive behaviour.

This study will contribute to our understanding of child sexual abuse by priests and members of religious orders by engaging with the perpetrators of abuse directly, by showing an empathic understanding of their lives, and inviting them to explore honestly how they found themselves acting in this way. It will also provide data which will contribute to our understanding of what took place and enable us to provide information leading to proposals for formation, training, and the healthy living of celibate consecrated life that can help the Church to prevent such acts happening again.

The principal researcher will invite the participants to explore their lives, formation, family history, personal growth and development, experiences of formation (or lack of formation) for sexuality and celibacy, as well as aspects of Marist life and culture which impacted on their behaviour and

choices, including taught or implicit theologies. The research will also focus on spirituality and how this developed before and after the discovery of abuse.

Data Security

The qualitative data that emerges from the recordings of the sessions will be transcribed by AVR Transcription Limited, a professional transcription service based in Horwich, England. Everything will be done to ensure anonymity. The files will be transferred to a secure environment each day after the recordings have been made, and immediately removed from the recording devices. The data will be uploaded to a secure Egress workspace—all content is encrypted in transit and at rest using AES256-bit encryption in fully accredited data centres. The director and the principal researcher will have access to this system and the principal researcher has a dedicated access point. The transcriptions will be anonymised after I return to Scotland, and identifying names and details will be removed by 31 March 2020.

The transcripts will be analysed using NVivo software and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) which is an appropriate qualitative research methodology for this kind of study.

There is little research evidence from priests and brothers who abused, where they have been invited to give an account of their lives, motivation, and behaviour. This research will enable the voice of these men to be heard, and will help the Marist Brothers and the wider Church to understand better what happened from the perspective of the men who abused.

I wish to emphasise, in the clearest possible terms, that you are free to withdraw from this research project at any point, with no need to give any reason. Your wishes are paramount in this regard. Should you have any concerns about your participation, please contact my supervisor, Julie Clague, my assistant supervisor Dr John O'Connor, or the Ethics Officer

for the Faculty of Arts, Dr James Simpson, whose contact details can be found below.

I also need to advise you that access requests and objections can be submitted via the Data Protection and Freedom of Information proforma available at:

https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/dpfoioffice/gdpr/gdprrequests/.

Conclusion

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As I have written above, I believe that the voice of those who were involved in abuse needs to be heard in order to help us to understand better this complex issue.

I plan to spend one month in Australia from 29 January 2020 until 25 February 2020. During that time, I plan to interview you and the other participants individually, during the course of a day. That will provide time for more than one session with each person who agrees to participate. I will ask you to sign a consent form and a recording agreement in order to enable me to undertake this study. I am aware that the interviews may be challenging and could lead to some distress or anxiety. I have been informed that it is likely that you have a trusted counsellor with whom you meet. If you don't, then suitable support arrangements can be made. Please let me know if you do not already have access to a counsellor or therapist.

Brother Peter Carroll has asked me to return to Australia in September and early October 2020 to lead a retreat for the brothers in the Province. This visit, six months after our initial meeting, provides an opportunity for me to meet you a second time, to share what has begun to emerge from the data, and to allow you an opportunity to add further comments and insights as a result of what I can share with you.

I am profoundly grateful to you for your willingness to participate in this study. I hope it is clear to you that I am interested in the welfare of brothers and former brothers who have abused, as well as wanting to benefit from your experience to help us to understand better how the abuse occurred, and to learn lessons for the future which can be of help to our Marist Institute and the wider Church. As you will understand, I plan to share the results of the research in presentations and scholarly articles, with due regard and protection of your anonymity, and without causing you any anxiety or stress.

Sincerely,

Brendan

Brother Brendan Geary, FMS

Researcher's name and email contact:	Brendan Geary: xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk
Supervisor's name and email contact:	Julie Clague: Julie.Clague@glasgow.ac.uk
Assistant Supervisor	Dr John O'Connor: john.OConnor@glasgow.ac.uk
Faculty of Arts Ethics Officer	Dr James Simpson: james.simpson@glasgow.ac.uk
Departmental address:	Theology and Religious Studies 4 The Square University of Glasgow Glasgow G12 8QQ United Kingdom

Appendix 4: Consent to Participate/Agreement to the Processing of Data

- Self-understandings of Marist brothers who have abused children.

I understand that Brendan Geary (the researcher) is collecting data in the form of written notes and audio-recorded interviews for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow. I understand that all personal information will be anonymised, such as name, personal details, and any other identifying information.

A)   I consent to participate in the interview on the following terms:
1. I can leave any question unanswered.
2. The interview can be stopped at any point.
3. Having read the participant letter, I have given due consideration to the potential impact of the interview on my well-being and my access to support.
4. I have been advised with regard to the potential legal limits to confidentiality. I understand that if I make any disclosure with regard to offences not previously reported or investigated, the researcher may be under a statutory obligation to pass this information to the relevant offices.

B)   I agree to the processing of data for this project on the following terms:
1. Under EU legislation (General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), I understand and agree that the "lawful basis" for the processing of personal data is that the project constitutes "a task in the public interest," and that any processing of special category data is "necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research."
2. Project materials in both physical and electronic form will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage (locked

physical storage; appropriately encrypted, password-protected devices and university user accounts) at all times.

3. The recorded interviews will be transcribed by a professional third-party service, with the handling of the material kept secure, confidential, and subject to the terms of a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). All transfer of materials, audio or documentary, will be via secured mechanisms.

4. The files will be transferred to a secure environment each day after the recordings have been made. Recordings will be uploaded to Egress as soon as the interview is complete and immediately removed from the recording devices.

5. The transcriptions will be retained in a secure environment until the dissertation has been completed and successfully defended. At that point they will be destroyed.

6. All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be removed or redacted. From this point on, the data will be anonymised. This process will be completed by 31 March 2020.

7. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review a copy of the redacted interview transcript.

8. I understand that once the transcript has been anonymised, then in keeping with EU legislation (GDPR):

   a. The researcher has the right to use this material in accordance with the scope of the project.

   b. Under the same legislation, I retain the rights of access and objection, and understand that the university is required to comply with any legitimate requests in that regard.

   c. The provisions associated with anonymous data no longer apply where a participant has legitimate grounds for concern that they remain directly identifiable (i.e. that the data is "pseudonymous" in GDPR terms) from it or that it has been used for purposes other than those stated.

9. Project materials will be retained in secure storage by the university for 10 years for archival purposes (longer if the material is consulted during that time). Consent forms will also be retained for the purposes of record.

10. The anonymised materials may be used in future research and be cited and discussed in future publications, both print and online.

C)   Confirmation of informed consent/ agreement to data processing

☐		1) I have read and reviewed the attached participant information sheet and consent to be interviewed for this research project. As part of this, I confirm I have been given information about how to exercise my rights to <u>access</u> and <u>objection</u> as defined under GDPR.
☐		2) I agree to this interview being recorded and notes being taken.
☐		3) I agree to a copy of this interview being stored for the purposes of this research and then being destroyed.
☐		4) I agree to my words appearing in the research thesis and related publications.
☐		5) I understand that my personal details such as name, phone number, personal address, or email address will not be revealed to people outside the project.

Signed by the contributor:

……………………………………………………………………

Please print your name:

……………………………………………………………………

Date:

……………………………………………………………………

Researcher's name and email contact:	Brendan Geary: xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk
Supervisor's name and email contact:	Julie Clague: Julie.Clague@glasgow.ac.uk
Assistant supervisor	Dr John O'Connor: john.OConnor@glasgow.ac.uk
Faculty of Arts Ethics Officer	Dr James Simpson: james.simpson@glasgow.ac.uk
Departmental Address:	Theology and Religious Studies 4 The Square University of Glasgow Glasgow G12 8QQ United Kingdom

Appendix 5:   Recording Agreement Form

The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that your contribution is stored in strict accordance with your wishes. The recordings will be uploaded to the transcription service via a dedicated secure link where content is immediately encrypted and a full audit trail is available. The interviews will be transcribed by AVR Transcription Limited, a professional transcription service based in England which works with the highest level of security clearance due to the sensitivity of the work they undertake for U.K. government agencies. For further details, a datasheet is available for the workspace at this address: https://www.egress.com/what-we-offer/egress_secure_workspace_datasheet_nov_2019-pdf/download. The director and the principal researcher will have access to this system and the principal researcher has a dedicated access point. The files will be transferred to a secure environment each day after the recordings have been made. Recordings will be uploaded to Egress as soon as the interview is complete and will be removed immediately from the recording devices.

The transcripts will be saved on a backup disc in my office and will be held until I have completed the research degree for which I am studying at Glasgow University. Excerpts from the interviews, which will be anonymised, may be used in presentations and future publications; but no identifying information will be given beyond the fact that the quotations come from interviews with Marists or former Marists from Australia who have abused children at some point in their past. The purpose of the research is to extend and deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of child abuse from the perspective of those who abused.

I hereby assign the use of the recorded interview with Brendan Geary at the University of Glasgow. I understand that it will be securely stored and used as detailed here.

A copy of the transcript will be sent to you for checking. Please indicate if you wish anything to be changed or taken out.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Instructions:                                │
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│                                              │
│                                              │
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│                                              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Signed by the contributor: _____

Date: _____

Name of contributor (please

print):_____

Address:_____

_____

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Researcher's name and email contact:                    │
│ Brendan Geary: xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk               │
│                                                          │
│ Supervisor's name and email contact:                    │
│ Julie Clague: Julie.Clague@glasgow.ac.uk                │
│                                                          │
│ Assistant Supervisor:                                    │
│ Dr John O'Connor: john.OConnor@glasgow.ac.uk            │
│                                                          │
│ Faculty of Arts Ethics Officer:                          │
│ Dr James Simpson: james.simpson@glasgow.ac.uk           │
│                                                          │
│ Department address:                                      │
│ c/o Theology and Religious Studies, 4,University Gardens, Glasgow │
│ University G12 8QQ                                       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Appendix 6:   Questionnaire Content (Description)

Interview 1

<u>Preliminary:</u>

Where and when were you born? Family background and early experiences in life?

<u>Marist Vocation:</u>

When did you first have a sense of wanting to become a Marist brother. Did you attend the Marist juniorate? How would you describe your experience at the juniorate?

<u>Early experiences of sexual development:</u>

When do you first remember becoming aware of sex? How was this dealt with in your family? Did you have any personal experience of sexual abuse? If so, can you share what happened and how you responded? In what ways do you think that your early experiences of sex may have influenced your later development? Do you think that the choice to become a Marist brother was influenced by these early experiences or awarenesses?

<u>Novitiate:</u>

Where did you do your novitiate? How would you describe this experience? How was celibacy/chastity dealt with?

<u>Student years:</u>

What do you remember about your years as a scholastic? What do you remember about how you dealt with sexual feelings during these years? What kind of formation or instruction did you receive in this area? Did you ever talk about the sexual aspect of your life with anyone?

<u>Ministry and community:</u>

How would you describe your years in ministry and community? What stands out as positive experiences for you? What were the challenges and stresses for you?

Interview 2

<u>Experience of abuse:</u>

Can you share with me what happened when you were involved in abuse? When do you first remember thinking about this? Can you remember how you first responded? Can you share with me how you moved from having this thought to acting on it? How did you feel at the time? How did the young person respond? How did this affect you? Were there other occasions? How did you understand what was happening in your life at that time? How long did this continue?

In so far as you thought about it, what do you think would have happened if the young person had informed an adult and you had been confronted about the abuse? What is the worst that you think would have happened? Did anything ever happen?

<u>Discovery:</u>

At some point you were informed of an allegation against you. How did you respond? How was the experience of discovery, trial, and sentencing?

How did you understand what was happening at that time? What was the impact on you and your family? When you look back, how do you feel about what happened?

Post-discovery:

How has your understanding developed since you were in prison and returned to community? What has been of assistance to you? How has your understanding of yourself and celibacy changed in these years? How do you make sense of the behaviour that led to your arrest and removal from ministry? Looking back, what would you like to have been different? Do you think you would have abused if you had not joined religious life?

Interview 3

Spirituality and faith:

Can you tell me about the role of spirituality, faith, and prayer in your early years? When would you say that you were most fervent and faithful to your spiritual life? How would you describe your spiritual life when you abused? What was your understanding of God at that time?

Did you reflect on your abusive behaviour in the light of retreat talks and spiritual and Marist resources?

Marist tradition:

Did you ever reflect on Fr Champagnat, his experience of Fr Courveille, and his treatment of postulants who abused? Were you aware of this part of our Marist history? Did you allow this to enter your awareness? If you had done so, would it have influenced you in any way?
How would you describe your spiritual and prayer life today? In what ways is it different from your life before discovery? What sustains your

life of prayer? What are key themes for you today? How does Mary figure in your spiritual life? Is this the same as before or different?

Reflections on abuse, the Church, and Marist Life:

When you look back on your life, in what ways do you think that your personal history or formation contributed to the abuse that took place? What aspects of the Church and religious life made it possible for abuse to happen and remain hidden? When you reflect on your own life, what do you think contributed to the abuse? As you reflect on the Marist Brothers in Australia and the Australian Church, can you identify aspects of theology and Institutional life that enabled abuse to take place and remain hidden for so long? Can you think of anything that would have prevented you from acting in the way that you did? When you look back on what happened, do you have any regrets? Do you see any graces or blessings in what happened for you? Has this crisis in any way been of service to the Marist Brothers or the Church in Australia?

Appendix 7: Comparison of General Offenders, Non-Clerical Sex Offenders and Clerical Sex Offenders on Ten Developmental Dimensions.

	Developmental Dimension	General Offending	Sexual Offending	Clerical offenders
1	Prevalence	The prevalence of offending peaks in the late teenage years – between 15 - 19	Prevalence appears to peak twice: in adolescence & mid-late 30s.	Offending peaks between 30 – 39 years of age (Terry, 2008, p. 559).
2	Age of onset and desistance patterns 1	The peak age of onset of offending is between 8 – 14 years, and the peak age of desistance is between 20 – 29 years.	Adult-onset more prevalent than adolescence-onset; variable desistance patterns depending on onset age and offender type.	Age of desistance depends on number of offences. Those with one offence abused on average for just over one year,[88] while those with more than 10 offences offended on average over 16 years.
3	Desistance patterns 2	An early age of onset predicts a relatively long criminal career duration and the commission of relatively many offenses.	Adolescence-onset offenders generally desist by early adulthood, but early onset common among persistent offenders.	Average age of onset of offending of clergy in John Jay Study: 38.91 years of age (Piquero et al, 2008, pp. 583 - 599). Earlier age of onset of sexual abusive behaviour is correlated with increased number of victims.
4	General criminality and antisociality	There is a marked continuity of offending and antisocial behaviour from childhood to the teenager years and to adulthood.	Continuity of general offending and antisocial behaviour, but generally low continuity of sexual behaviour problems and sexual offending.	Significantly later age threshold for majority of clerical offenders (mean = 38.9 years) with little evidence of prior antisociality A.R.C., 2017, p. 593).
5	Chronic offenders	A small fraction of the offending population commits a large fraction of the crimes, and these chronic offenders have an early onset, a	A similarly small proportion of sexual offenders responsible for larger number of victims, and these	3.5% of abusers in the John Jay study were responsible for abusing 26% of the known victims (Terry et al, 2011,

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[88] The majority of offenders in the John Jay Study had one allegation of abuse.

		high offending frequency, and a long criminal career.	chronic sexual offenders have an early onset, a high offending frequency, and a long sexual offending career.	pp 33 – 48).The more victims, the earlier recorded age of onset.
6	Versatile offending	Offending is versatile rather than specialised.	Versatile offending common among sexual offenders.	Generalists (range of ages, male and female victims) were the majority group (Tallon and Terry, 2008, p. 616). (Higher number of victims, corresponded with more generalization). However, the majority of victims of clergy are boys (81%), unlike non-clerical sex offenders. More than 40% of victims were boys aged between 11 – 14 when abuse began (Tallon and Terry, 2008, p. 615 – 628).
7	Antisociality	The types of acts defined as offenses are elements of a larger syndrome of antisocial behaviour, including heavy drinking, reckless driving, sexual promiscuity, bullying and truancy.	Similar patterns as noted in the box on the left are observed in sexual offenders.	Little evidence or incidence of antisociality in clerical offenders. Many present as exemplary teachers, pastors, spiritual directors, leaders.
8	Individual versus group offending	Most offenses up to the late teenage years are committed with others, whereas most offenses from age 20 onwards are committed alone.	Group offending generally infrequent for both adolescent and adult sexual offenders.	Most offences were committed alone. Many clerical offenders are surprised to find that others were behaving as they did.
9	Motivations	The reasons for offending up to the late teenage years are variable, including utilitarian	Motivations for sexual offending similarly variable, but utilitarian[89]	A range of motivations, clustering around confusion of emotional and sexual needs, low self-regulation in area

[89] The term "utilitarianism" is used in a range of different ways in philosophy and social science writing. Smallbone and Cale indicate that for their purposes utilitarian means "to obtain material goods or revenge." These do not emerge as significant motivational factors for clerical offenders. The table, and this comment, make it possible to highlight and compare the range of motivations that emerge in research with clerical offenders, which are summarised in column 4.

		(e.g., to obtain material goods or revenge), excitement of enjoyment), and anger (as for violent crimes), whereas from age 20 onwards utilitarian motives become increasingly dominant.	motives do not become dominant for older offenders.	of sexual behaviour, outlet for unexpressed anger and frustration, need for intimacy and control.
10	Specialization and diversification	Different types of offenses tend to be committed at different ages (e.g., shoplifting is typically committed before burglary, which in turn is typically committed before robbery). There is an increasing diversification of offending up to age 20, and after age 20 diversification decreases and specialization increases.	Sexual offending often preceded by varied nonsexual offending; specialization does not seem to increase in adulthood.	Clerical offenders specialize in sexual crimes. Boundary transgressions develop into boundary violations, though choice of victim remains constant for most clerical offenders. Generalists (male and female victims) were the majority group in the John Jay study. However, the majority of victims of clerical offenders are boys, though this may be related to opportunity.

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