



# **Child Abuse Within Religious Institutions**

*A Bibliography*

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**Championing and Strengthening the  
Global Response to Child Abuse**

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## Scope

This bibliography provides research literature covering a wide variety of topics related to the abuse of children within religious institutions. Various faiths and religious identities are included.

## Organization

Publications include articles, book chapters, reports, and research briefs and are listed in date descending order. Links are provided to full text publications when possible. However, this collection may not be complete. More information can be obtained in the Child Abuse Library Online.

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# Child Abuse Within Religious Institutions

## A Bibliography

Brodar Kaplja, S. (2026). [Sexual grooming in a Buddhist religious organization: A case study](#). *Journal of Forensic Psychology Research and Practice*, 1–22. DOI:10.1080/24732850.2026.2628125

Research on child sexual grooming strategies in religious settings is limited, particularly outside the Catholic Church. This single-case study examines sexual grooming within Buddhism in Slovenia using the content-validated Sexual Grooming Model. The primary data source is a book by the victim, in which the author provides detailed descriptions of the accused's behavior leading up to the sexual abuse. The findings suggest that most grooming behaviors align with the proposed model and highlight the interaction of situational factors, the victim's individual vulnerabilities, and environmental risks. The discussion addresses the implications for practice in this area.

Doctor, H., Anderson, R., Legerski, J. P., & King, A. R. (2026). Religion-justified childhood maltreatment and adult psychological maladjustment. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 18(1), 130–141. DOI:10.1037/rel0000587

Religion-justified child sexual, physical, and emotional abuse relies on aspects of religiosity (religious texts, context, or authority) to justify acts of maltreatment. These practices can be perpetrated and modeled by parents, clergy, and other authorities. While religious beliefs are known to often facilitate recovery from traumatic events, this analysis examined the impact of religion-justified abuse on subsequent psychological functioning. Survey respondents were solicited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk crowdsourcing platform ( $N = 839$ ) and examined to identify emotional correlates of religion-justified childhood physical or sexual abuse. Religion-justified childhood sexual (21.6%) and physical (23.7%) abuse were strongly associated with adult stress, anxiety,

anger, and depression symptomatology. The largest differences between the two abuse conditions (general vs. religion-justified) occurred for anxiety symptoms (childhood sexual abuse,  $d = 1.03$ ,  $OR = 4.44$ ; childhood physical abuse,  $d = 0.89$ ,  $OR = 4.24$ ). Recollections of religion-justified abuse were associated in this sample with relatively severe emotional symptomatology. Religion-justified child abuse appears to represent a unique form of maltreatment that warrants closer attention in the mental health community.

Lafferty, M. E., Humphreys, J., Jackson, K., McFarlane, L., & Cartwright, T. (2026). [Safeguarding against abuse in religious contexts: Challenges and potential in the relationship between statutory services and faith-based organizations.](#) *Pastoral Psychology*, 1-16. DOI:10.1007/s11089-025-01299-z

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are integral to community social structures, providing services that often extend beyond spiritual guidance. Due to their longstanding presence and trust within communities, FBOs are uniquely positioned to contribute to safeguarding efforts against abuse. Despite their potential, research indicates that there is a degree of ineffective collaboration between FBOs and statutory services (SSs), particularly in the context of safeguarding vulnerable individuals. The established literature suggests that many FBO safeguarding leads tend to be unaware of broader safeguarding policies and how to discuss concerns with SSs. The present study therefore explores the relationship between FBOs and SSs, aiming to identify factors that facilitate or hinder effective collaboration. Through an online open-ended questionnaire, data were gathered from 89 participants, including safeguarding leads in FBOs and professionals from SSs. Thematic analysis revealed four key themes: understanding and supporting spirituality, safeguarding awareness and challenges, communication and collaboration barriers, and suggestions for improved partnership. Helpfulness and understanding of spirituality by SSs led to positive experiences. Conversely, negative experiences stemmed from a lack of understanding of FBOs' safeguarding roles, poor information sharing, and complex

SSs processes. Participants suggested joint training and increased open communication to improve collaboration. The findings emphasize the need for context-specific training and respectful interorganizational (or interagency) working to foster better relationships between FBOs and SSs. Enhancing these partnerships is crucial for effective safeguarding and protection of vulnerable individuals within faith communities. Future research could delve into these suggestions in more depth and further explore the perspectives of SSs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these relationships. A more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between statutory bodies and those in voluntary safeguarding positions in faith settings.

Mckinney, S. (2026). [Taking the crucified people down from the cross: Child sex abuse in Catholic residential schools in Canada and Scotland](#). *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 1–18. DOI:10.1080/19422539.2026.2625317

Contemporary clerical child sex abuse has resulted in serious long term mental and physical illness for many of the victims and an ongoing scandal that has damaged the reputation of the Catholic church worldwide. Clerical child sex abuse and the inconsistent and often ineffective responses from the Catholic Church have been researched from a wide variety of perspectives: legal, ecclesial, sociological, psychological, theological and crisis management. This article is focussed on the accounts of the circumstances of clerical sexual abuse in some of the Catholic residential schools in Canada and Scotland, as represented in documentation from government inquiries. Adults other than priests, religious brothers and sisters also engaged in this sexual abuse. Two hermeneutical lenses are adopted to analyse these accounts of sexual abuse and the response from the Catholic church to accusations of sex abuse in some of their institutions. First, the adoption of image repair theory from the perspective of crisis management and, second, from a Catholic theological perspective, the theology of the cross of Moltmann. This latter lens was applied by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino to the context of late twentieth

century El Salvador and they argued that the oppressed people of El Salvador had to be taken down from the cross so that they could rise again. Similarly, the adults who were sexually abused as children now have to be taken down from the cross.

Belser, M. S. (2025). [Betraying the faith: Understanding “unChristian” culture and socialization that contribute to child sexual abuse in Christian organizations.](#) *APSAC Advisor*, 38(4), 8-25.

As more and more scrutiny is placed on youth-serving organizations, it is important to understand the organizational factors that contribute to child sexual abuse within such organizations. Providing access to children to those who would do them harm makes youth-serving organizations at a higher risk of child sexual abuse occurring within their ranks. Greater access to children, however, is not the only factor that makes youth-serving organizations at a higher risk of child sexual abuse. There are various internal cultural factors that also contribute to this higher risk. The purpose of this article is to guide researchers and practitioners in exploring how certain cultures and viewpoints within churches and other Christian institutions can influence child sexual abuse within their ranks. For purposes of this article, only Christian churches and organizations are in view.

Cocco, E., Hashimoto, Y. Z., & Chopin, J. (2025). [Child sexual abuse in the Catholic church: A scoping review of characteristics, prevalence, and explanatory factors.](#) *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 101, 102499. DOI:10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2025.102499

This scoping review examines the academic literature on child sexual abuse (CSA) within the Catholic Church. Although clerical CSA has received significant global attention through media reports and public inquiries, scholarly research remains fragmented across disciplines and regions. This review synthesizes 50 peer-reviewed articles published between 1985 and 2023. Its goals are to trace the evolution of academic interest, identify dominant research themes, and analyze the disciplinary and

methodological characteristics of existing studies. Findings indicate a noticeable increase in publications following major scandals in the early 2000s, particularly in North America, Australia, and Western Europe. The literature is dominated by legal, historical, and psychological approaches, with growing attention to victims' experiences and institutional responses. However, key gaps persist—especially regarding international comparisons, the evaluation of prevention policies, and the inclusion of survivor perspectives from non-Western settings. Quantitative and mixed-methods research remains limited, restricting the development of generalizable insights. This review highlights the need for more interdisciplinary and empirically grounded work, incorporating criminological, sociological, and public health perspectives. By providing a comprehensive synthesis of current academic knowledge, it helps define future research priorities and encourages more systematic, inclusive, and globally informed approaches to institutional CSA in religious contexts.

Freeman, Q. (2025). [Heeding Christ's charge to protect children: Applying vicarious liability for Mormon clergy abuse](#). *UC Davis Business Law Journal*, 25, 135-169.

Around the nation, children in Mormon congregations sing the loving words, "Fathers are so special. They watch us and protect us. They guide us and direct us, back to our home above." Paternal fathers, clergy fathers, and godly fathers are each referred to in the song as "fathers." Mormonism teaches children to trust their bishop and develop relationships with him, as he represents Jesus Christ. Tragically, some Mormon bishops take advantage of their institution-given power and authority to sexually abuse these trusting and vulnerable children. A reporting service, which began in December of 2022, verified over 500 criminal cases involving Mormon Church leaders who used their institutional authority to molest Mormon parishioners. What remedies are left to these victims when religious entities, purporting to be led by god, fail to protect them and enable abusers through a grant of absolute power and authority? Victims have several options –

including filing suits against their abusers and the entities that enabled their abuse. While clergy abuse victims can sue religious entities under many legal theories, this Note will focus solely on vicarious liability claims. Generally, for vicarious liability claims, the burden on the plaintiff is lower, recovery is more significant, and courts have recently begun recognizing these claims, allowing survival past summary judgment.

Hunt, G. R., Higgins, D. J., & Willis, M. L. (2025). [“Just tick the box and move on”: Australian Christian religious leaders reflect on safeguarding practices in their settings.](#) *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 167, 107591. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2025.107591

Child maltreatment remains a global problem with ongoing efforts needed to safeguard children and young people. The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse prompted large scale reforms for organisations, however, there is limited research available on the quality and consistency of these safeguards in religious organisations. This study aimed to explore Australian religious leaders perspectives on the current strengths and limitations of safeguarding practices in their settings. Twenty Christian religious leaders in Australia were interviewed online and asked about their role, current strengths in policies and practices, challenges and areas for improvement, and future directions. Participants attended a 60-minute semi-structured interview where data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. While leadership commitment and improvements to safeguarding policy and practice were evident, significant ongoing challenges were identified. Cultural resistance and a perception of safeguarding as unnecessary external regulation impede meaningful change. Gendered power dynamics, a reliance on compliance focused approaches, and resource constraints also limit progress. Our findings highlight the importance of prioritising contextual prevention strategies that leverage community-centred strengths to create safer environments and consider risks between peers and for vulnerable adults. Positioning safeguarding as core to mission, collaboration between religious organisations, and

prioritising the voices of children and victim-survivors are key opportunities to strengthen safeguarding initiatives. These findings contribute to a growing body of research, providing practical insights and implications.

Krinkin, Y., & Dekel, R. (2025). Disclosure of sexual abuse committed by rabbis: How family members perceive its effects on their relationships with the victims. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 163, 107423. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2025.107423

Sexual abuse by religious authorities (SARA) is a widespread phenomenon, with unique consequences for victims and their family members. To the best of our knowledge, no research has focused on the experiences of family members of SARA victims or their perspectives regarding changes in their relationships with the victims. This study is part of a larger study on the implications of SARA incidences committed by rabbis. The current study focused on family members' perceptions of the effects of SARA victims' abuse disclosure on their relationships with them. Based on a constructivist-phenomenological paradigm, semi-structured indepth interviews were conducted with 14 family members (mothers, siblings, and a spouse) of religious men who had been sexually abused by rabbis during their adolescence. Two main themes regarding the relationships between the family members and the SARA victims emerged from the findings: the closeness-distance axis, which covers a spectrum from becoming closer to moving away from the victim, and "Who needs protection: The victim or me?". Regarding the latter theme, two groups were unveiled: Family members who focused on the victim's needs and protecting him, and family members who were wary of the victim and felt the need to protect themselves. The findings illustrate the various changes in relationships between family members and male victims following SARA disclosure. The importance of providing emotional aid to family members to help both them and the victims recovery is emphasized.

Sidebotham, P. (2025). [How safe is your church? What can we learn from children and young people about safeguarding in the church of England?](#) *Child Abuse Review*, 34(6), e70082. DOI:10.1002/car.70082

This participatory research sought the views of children and young people on their feelings of safety in church youth groups. Thirty-two young people, aged 9–19 years, participated in five focus groups. The research approach was designed in consultation with a young persons' steering group, who also helped in the coding and analysis of the data. A blended approach to qualitative analysis was taken, drawing on principles of phenomenology and grounded theory. Three core themes were identified from the data: Young people want to feel welcome and able to join in, they want to be respected and included and they want a safe and secure environment. These themes were explored in relation to the physical and social environment, leadership and the relevance of God, spirituality and religion for these young people. The findings point to the need for churches and other faith-based organisations to have robust and effective policies, structures and procedures for keeping children safe. These need to be embedded within and flow out of atmospheres that enable children to feel safe, respected, welcomed and included. For these to be meaningful, those running such services need to listen to children and young people, to hear their priorities and concerns, and take those into account in the way they design their programmes and activities.

Wyles, P., O'Leary, P., Tsantefski, M., & Young, A. (2025). [Male survivors of institutional child sexual abuse: A review](#). *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 26(1), 183–198. DOI:10.1177/15248380241277272

Male child sexual abuse is over-represented in institutional settings. This realization has increasingly come into public focus in recent decades initially through lived experience, often with male survivors' stories told in the media and subsequently through court cases and government inquiries. Beginning at the turn of the century with the Irish Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (1999–2009), numerous national and state inquiries into

institutional child abuse followed around the world. This scoping review asks the question: What is known from the research about the institutional child sexual abuse of males? Conducted in 2023 five databases were used (APA PsycINFO, CINAL, Medline, Scopus, Web of Science) producing 973 studies for screening. Applying the Arksey and O'Malley framework resulted in 29 studies meeting the inclusion criteria, which were analyzed. Of the 29 studies, 27 could be categorized into 3 broad areas of focus: survivor experience, impact, and disclosure. Two further studies considered: turning points and meaning making. The findings are discussed under the following headings: disclosure, impacts (emotional, mental health, alcohol, and other impacts), and what is helpful to victim/survivors. Implications for practice, policy, and research are examined along with limitations of the current research.

Bunge, M. J. (2024). [Christianity, child well-being, and corporal punishment](#). In R. Domingo, G. S. Hauk, & T. P. Jackson (Eds.), *Faith in law, law in faith: Reflecting and building on the work of John Witte, Jr.* (pp. 540–567). Brill Nijhoff.  
DOI:10.1163/9789004546189\_029

Although many legal strides have been made around the world over the past one hundred years regarding child protection and children's rights, children face a host of ongoing and newly emerging challenges. Although sixty-five countries have now banned the corporal punishment of children in all settings,<sup>5</sup> this practice is legally and politically tolerated in the U.S..The lack of a united efforts to address the corporal punishment of children in the U.S. is especially heartbreaking, given its widespread use and the now well-established evidence that physical punishment is not only ineffective but also harmful to children's development. This chapter focuses on the U.S. and Christian grounds for rejecting the corporal punishment of children and has implications for any secular or religious child advocacy groups that seek to reduce spanking and corporal punishment. This chapter can be a springboard for faith leaders and child advocates from diverse

religious traditions to search for and emphasize not only scientific but also religious and spiritual grounds for ending corporal punishment in their faith communities.

Hunt, G. R., Mathews, B., Higgins, D. J., Finkelhor, D., Willis, M. L., Haslam, D. M., Lawrence, D., Meinck, F., Thomas, H. J., Malacova, E., Pacella, R. E., & Scott, J. G. (2024). [The prevalence of child sexual abuse perpetrated by leaders or other adults in religious organizations in Australia](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *155*, 106946. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106946

Numerous national public inquiries have highlighted the problem of child sexual abuse in religious organizations. Despite this, evidence of population-wide prevalence is scarce. In order to provide the first nationally representative prevalence estimates of child sexual abuse perpetrated by adults in religious organizations, the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) surveyed 8503 people aged 16 and over about their experiences of child maltreatment. Weighted prevalence estimates were calculated based on responses to the child sexual abuse questions from the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire-R2: Adapted Version (ACMS). One in 250 people reported being sexually abused as a child by an adult in a religious organization (0.4 %, 95 % CI, 0.3–0.6 %). Men reported significantly higher rates of child sexual abuse by these perpetrators (0.8 %, 95 % CI, 0.5–1.2 %), compared to women (0.1 %, 95 % CI, 0–0.3 %). This type of sexual abuse was overwhelmingly perpetrated by men (0.4 %, 95 % CI, 0.3–0.6 %), compared to women (0 %, 95 % CI, 0–0.1 %), and was substantially more often experienced in Catholic organizations (71.9 %) than other Christian denominations or other religions. Prevalence of child sexual abuse in religious organizations has declined over time (2.2 % of men 65 years and older, compared with 0.2 % of 16–24-year-old men). Child sexual abuse has been widespread in religious organizations in Australia. A decline over time indicates progress has been made in preventing sexual abuse of children. Religious organizations must take all reasonable measures to prevent child sexual abuse, with a particular need for interventions targeting male leaders, and organizational cultures.

Sicilia, L., Barrios, M., & Pereda, N. (2024). [Posttraumatic growth, spiritual damage, and psychosocial and mental health problems in survivors of clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse: A mixed methods approach](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 153, 106862. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106862

Although clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CSA) implies severe traumatic repercussions for the victims, they may also experience posttraumatic growth (PTG) deriving from the need to deal with the trauma suffered. This PTG is associated with the processes of recovery, healing, and empowerment. Thirty-one survivors ( $M = 51.6$  years) in the quantitative stage of the research, and seven ( $M = 49.3$ ) in the qualitative stage were examined, applying a mixed methods approach to analyse PTG outcomes and to explore experiences of PTG in survivors of Spanish clergy-perpetrated CSA and its relation with psychosocial, mental and spiritual suffering. A sequential mixed methods study design was applied using standardized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Descriptive, correlation and thematic analyses were conducted. The quantitative and qualitative data were integrated. Positive associations were found between PTG and psychosocial and mental health problems ( $r = 0.53; p < .01$ ), damage to faith in God ( $r = 0.43; p < .05$ ) and damage to faith in the Church ( $r = 0.48; p < .01$ ). Three themes emerged from the qualitative data that explained, expanded, and complemented the quantitative results, highlighting the relationship between damage and growth and the specific meanings of PTG from the perspectives of the survivors. This study shows that survivors may develop PTG in the course of the processes of psychological suffering, spiritual transformation, and meaning-making of traumatic experiences.

Stier, A., Vieth, V., Douglas, R. M., Peters, R., Singer, P., & Sloan, M. (2024). A forgotten millstone: Denialism and child abuse in the Christian church. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 33(8), 1100–1129. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2024.2435551

Christianity was founded on the teachings of Jesus, whose words emphasize protecting and honoring children. Jesus' teachings are historically unique for the period with his

emphasis on safeguarding children, but the church moved away from this focus. First century Christianity adopted protections for children and harsh consequences for those who would abuse a child. Over time, much of Christianity lost this focus. Now, churches at every level experience countless scandals. More churches have begun addressing this crisis, but many resist accountability and prevention efforts. They minimize, deny, and oppose survivors, causing deep wounds. This umbrella review examines public resources and the authors' experience and expertise to assess the prevalence, risks, and effects of abuse and denialism within Christian communities. It synthesizes insight from multiple sources to inform this analysis. Despite the forces of denialism in many Christian communities, voices are rising, demanding safeguards and accountability. This chorus, led by survivors, gives hope that denialism in the Christian church may one day be overcome. Although this article focuses on Christian churches, similar issues affect most religions.

Bajos, N., Ancian, J., Tricou, J., Valendru, A., Pousson, J.-E., & Moreau, C. (2023). Child sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic church in France: Prevalence and comparison with other social spheres. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 38*(7-8), 5452-5470. DOI:10.1177/08862605221124263

This study aims to estimate and compare Roman Catholic Church-related child sexual abuse (CSA) prevalence and characteristics to CSA in other social spheres in France since 1950. Using a cross-sectional representative web-based survey of 28,026 adults in 2021, the weighted prevalence of CSA was estimated according to six social spheres of perpetration: family, Church, school, sports club, artistic activities, and summer camps. Altogether, 14.60%, 95% confidence interval [CI: 13.41; 15.80] of female respondents and 6.38% [5.73; 7.03] of male respondents had experienced CSA. Family was the most common social sphere of perpetration (3.55% [3.18; 3.92]), followed by the Church (0.81% [0.62; 0.99] of respondents exposed) and public schools (0.32% [0.23; 0.40] of respondents exposed). Altogether, we estimate 213,000, 95% CI [147,000; 278,000] people

were victims of Church CSA since 1950 in France. Church CSA was more common among men than women (1.28% [0.93; 1.64] vs. 0.34% [0.20; 0.48]) while the opposite was true for other social spheres. CSA was overwhelmingly perpetrated by men ranging from 93.37% in the Church to 97.65% in schools. Many victims spoke with someone about these abuses: 41.81% of the Catholic Church compared to 41.25% of school CSA victims and 51.68% of family CSA victims. Results suggest structural factors including gender norms, but also the spiritual authority of the priest and the culture of secrecy contribute to clerical CSA.

Rashid, F., & Barron, I. (2023). Jehovah's witnesses response to child sexual abuse: A critique of organisational behaviour and management policies (1989–2020). *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 29(1), 118–139. DOI: 10.1080/13552600.2021.2018513

Because of limited academic literature, this study aims to encourage research into child sexual abuse (CSA) in the worldwide Christian Congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses (JW). A hermeneutic analysis of literature in the public domain is conducted to evaluate JW's policies to address CSA, since 1989. Analysis indicated that an institutional culture of secrecy was consistently developed and maintained over decades by managing CSA cases internally, avoiding intervention from secular authorities amid reputational, authoritarian, and financial concerns. Organisational management policies were rationalised on a literal interpretation of biblical law over secular law, allowing CSA to be treated as a sin, rather than a crime against child. This resulted in the reinstatement of those found guilty of abuse; whereas children were placed at further risk of harm. Finally, the JW consistently denied organisational liability for CSA; viewing child protection as a parental responsibility.

Russell, D. H., Stewart, J., & Higgins, D. J. (2023). Safeguarding in church: Children and young people's perceptions of safety in religious and other faith-based settings. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 38*(3-4), 4459-4485.  
DOI:10.1177/08862605221117548

Organizations that interact with children and young people have a duty of care to ensure the safety of those children and young people from any manner of abuse, particularly from child sexual abuse. Faith-based (“religious”) organizations are of particular interest due to the number of victims/survivors speaking out about their experiences of grooming, child sexual abuse, and other forms of harm in religious organizations. Focusing on addressing the risks and improving safeguarding efforts, prevention activities benefit from giving children agency and a voice. We conducted a study using two focus groups with children and young people involved with two different Christian denominations. We conducted activities and led discussions regarding their views about safety in the context of the faith-based organization with which they engage. Children and young people described different potentially unsafe situations, their likely frequency, and the level of impact such situations would have from their own point of view. They also described how they thought adults in their faith-based organization would see them. Thematic analysis of the data supported four themes related to young people’s sense of safety: concerning behavior of adults and other young people, fear of judgment by others (adults and peers), sense of or lack of empowerment due to power dynamics, and the importance of a sense of “familiarity.” Visual comparisons of the data on scatterplots suggested differences not only in the level of impact and frequency of potentially unsafe situations between young people and adults but also between the two denominations. Children and young people can provide a wealth of information regarding their safety concerns when involved in programs and services at faith-based organizations. Clergy and other faith-based organizational leaders should consider how the context in which young people are involved (including interdenominational and interfaith difference, as well as the diverse types of activities young people are involved with) can affect their safety concerns.

Sigad, L. I. (2023). ["It's a phenomenon in our community, a phenomenon that is silenced": Child sexual abuse and the circles of silence in the Jewish National religious community in Israel.](#) *Social Sciences*, 13(1), 26. DOI:10.3390/socsci13010026

This study focused on Jewish national religious educators in Israel by exploring their narratives surrounding coping with the CSA of their students, including the perceived silencing of the phenomena within the community and the desire to provide their students with the care they require. In-depth interviews were conducted with 34 national religious educators, including teachers ( $n = 20$ ), counselors ( $n = 4$ ), and principals ( $n = 10$ ), which were analyzed using a thematic approach. Three themes emerged in the findings: (1) a community in silence surrounding CSA, (2) the role of sex education in bridging between silence and CSA, and (3) educators' experiences of breaking the silence by making their voices heard. The findings revealed that the participants experienced three circles of silencing surrounding CSA: silencing of their experience within their community, silencing of their students, and self-silencing. These circles affected the educators both personally and professionally. This study discusses how these circles of silence received three justifications: familial, religious, and personal. This study highlights the important role of Jewish national religious educators in identifying and leading interventions in CSA cases and the need for reflective, socio-religious, culturally based training alongside support for the educators to maintain their wellbeing when addressing CSA.

Taylor, R. M. (2023). [Religious organizations in Missouri continue to escape liability in negligence actions involving abuse of children under the guise of the First Amendment.](#) *Missouri Law Review*, 87(4), 12.

"Church allowed abuse by priest for years" was the headline of the Boston Globe on Sunday, January 6, 2002. Reporters at the Boston Globe exposed the truth about the horrendous decades of child sexual abuse at the hands of Catholic priests in the Boston area. This story launched the Catholic Church's secrets into public view and helped

unravel the pattern of abuse perpetuated by its leaders for decades. The abuse, however, was not limited to the city of Boston—or even just the United States. Claims of sexual abuse spanned the globe. Thousands of priests have been accused, and the Catholic Church has paid almost \$4 billion in lawsuits stemming from sexual abuse allegations. Church officials often swept these abuse allegations under the rug and effectively allowed priests to continue abusing children for decades. This represents a deeply-rooted systemic problem—church leaders protected priests and the image of the Catholic Church at the expense of children. When allegations came to light, rather than hold abusers accountable for their actions, church leaders would simply move the abusers to another diocese where they could continue harming children.

Winters, G. M., Jeglic, E. L., Terry, K. J., & Gilleran, K. (2023). Child sexual grooming of Catholic clergy: A comparison between victims allegedly abused by clergy with single versus multiple victims. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 32*(1), 91–115.  
DOI:10.1080/10538712.2022.2163020

There is evidence that clergy who commit child sexual abuse (CSA) may utilize sexual grooming behaviors in the offense process consistent with a content-validated model (Sexual Grooming Model; SGM). Although research has examined differences in characteristics between clergy with single versus multiple CSA victims, little is known about how sexual grooming behaviors may vary between these groups. The present study utilized a large sample of alleged clergy sexual abuse incidents (n = 10,667) to examine the differences in reported sexual grooming behaviors for victims who experienced abuse by an individual who had a single (V-SVOs) or multiple (V-MVOs) victims. As part of a larger study, files of victim reports of CSA were reviewed from 195 dioceses/eparchies and 140 religious institutes in the United States; these data were analyzed based on behaviors in the SGM for the present study. Overall, the findings showed that the two groups (V-SVOs and V-MVOs) experienced similar tactics throughout the sexual grooming process outlined by the SGM. However, there were some

differences for certain tactics within the gaining access and isolation, trust development, and desensitization to sexual contact and physical touch stages of sexual grooming. The implications for prevention, policy, and treatment, as well as future directions of research, are discussed.

Chowdhury, R., Winder, B., Blagden, N., & Mulla, F. (2022). ["I thought in order to get to God I had to win their approval": A qualitative analysis of the experiences of Muslim victims abused by religious authority figures](#). *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 28*(2), 196–217. DOI:10.1080/13552600.2021.1943023

The abuse of individuals by religious authority figures has generated considerable political, civic and media attention. To date, much of this focus has been on Catholic and Anglican priests, although instances in the Buddhist community have also emerged. This paper presents an analysis of the experiences of individuals ( $n = 6$ ) who were victims of abuse by Imams (Muslim leaders) and/or Muslim faith teachers. Participants were interviewed and their accounts analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This paper presents two superordinate themes that emerged from the rich data set: (i) *Toxicity of silence* and (ii) *Barriers to the acknowledgement of abuse*. Findings and implications of the research are discussed in relation to facilitating the reporting of abuse perpetrated by religious authority figures in the Muslim communities as well as how it affects victims' wellbeing and their relationships with their families and their faith.

Death, J., Richards, K., & McPhillips, K. (2022). Understanding clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse as organised offending: Networks versus individuals. In P. Birch, C. Murray, & A. McInness (Eds.), *Crime, criminal justice and religion: A critical appraisal* (pp. 236–249). Routledge. DOI:10.4324/9781003276593

Clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse (CPCSA) has been recognised internationally as having devastating impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Both research and

the results of public inquiries have pointed to the systemic nature of CPCSA in religious organisations. Despite these findings, little research has considered CPCSA and subsequent cover-up as organised. This chapter argues for the significance of understanding CPCSA as organised offending and the importance of this for policymakers and ongoing management of CPCSA. Utilising Social Network Analysis and Dark Networks Theory, the work points to the potential internationalisation of clergy offending and the vulnerability of developing nation states where disruption of networks may not have occurred. Relevant considerations include the role of a strong democracy, the importance of independent media representations, and changing policy in the care and resourcing of vulnerable children away from large-scale children's homes.

Elzamzamy, K., Hazratji, Z., & Khwaja, M. (2022). [Punishment, child abuse, and mandated reporting](#). *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice*, 4(1), 51-78. DOI:10.18060/26546

Child abuse may take multiple forms, such as neglect and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. In the US, physical abuse is considered a crime and, according to the law, must be reported by those working in numerous professions, among them that of mental health. Failing to report child abuse can have legal and professional repercussions. Corporal punishment (CP), a common disciplinary practice in many cultures and households, may be difficult to distinguish from child abuse. Additionally, perspectives on corporal punishment vary among cultures and may find justifications in religious traditions. Therefore, addressing it in clinical practice is surrounded by ethical and professional challenges. This paper explores the challenges and ideals of addressing CP and physical abuse according to the perspectives of Islam and professional clinical practice, with a particular focus on the American Muslim context. After exploring the Islamic worldview on parenting and CP, the paper will explore ethical dilemmas facing clinicians with regard to reporting child abuse and offer practical recommendations informed by the Islamic tradition and the existing literature on the topic.

Korbman, M. D., Pirutinsky, S., Feindler, E. L., & Rosmarin, D. H. (2022). Childhood sexual abuse, spirituality/religion, anxiety and depression in a Jewish community sample: The mediating role of religious coping. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(15–16), NP12838–NP12856. DOI:10.1177/08862605211001462

Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is a pervasive problem impacting a broad range of mental health outcomes. Previous research has shown that spiritual and religious (S/R) factors both positively and negatively relate to mental health issues among survivors of CSA, but mediating mechanisms of effect are unclear. The present study examined CSA, anxiety, depression, and positive/negative religious coping among 372 Jewish community members with and without CSA histories. Individuals who experienced CSA endorsed significantly higher anxiety and depression as well as negative religious coping than those without CSA. Negative religious coping mediated the relationship between CSA and anxiety and depression. We discuss clinical and social implications of these findings, including the need to address S/R factors in treatment of CSA, especially within religious communities. Further research examining abuser identity, survivors' disclosure experience, and other S/R mediators of effect is warranted.

Lusky-Weisrose, E., Fleishman, T., & Tener, D. (2022). "A little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness": Online disclosure of child sexual abuse by authority figures in the Ultraorthodox Jewish community in Israel. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(19–20), NP17758–NP17783. DOI:10.1177/08862605211028370

Social media sites such as Facebook have become popular platforms for promoting public awareness of sexual abuse by encouraging user engagement around this issue. There is, therefore, currently emerging research on the functions and implications of social media as a platform for sexual abuse disclosure. However, as yet, no study has examined this phenomenon specifically through a religious-cultural lens. This study explores perceptions of, barriers to, and motives underlying online disclosure of child sexual abuse (CSA) by religious authority figures (RAFs) in ultraorthodox Jewish society in

Israel. The data were gleaned from the popular Facebook page of a nonprofit devoted to raising awareness of CSA in the ultraorthodox community. The analysis was based on admins' posts, anonymous and nonanonymous survivors' shares, users' comments, and in-depth interviews of eight page users. The findings suggest a culture-oriented model of online CSA disclosure (OCSAD), identifying four primary factors (safety, benefit, relevance, and legitimacy) that, weighed against cultural barriers, influence the decision to engage in online CSA disclosure. This context-informed understanding highlights the importance of social media as an alternative platform for CSA disclosure in an isolated but changing cultural arena such as the ultraorthodox community in Israel. The theoretical model is of international interest for its conceptualization of the unique characteristics and perceptions of OCSAD within religious-cultural contexts.

McPhillips, K., McEwan, T., Death, J., & Richards, K. (2022). Does gender matter? An analysis of the role and contribution of religious socialisation practices in the sexual abuse of boys and girls in the Catholic church. *Religion and Gender, 12*(1), 52-77. DOI:10.1163/18785417-01201008

Sociological and historical research into sexual violence against children has reported consistently that it is girls who have most often been the subject of sexual, psychological and physical violence in both familial and institutional settings. However, more recently, public inquiries have provided evidence that during the 20th century, boys were much more likely to be abused in particular kinds of religious settings. This has been substantiated in findings from inquiries in Australia, Ireland, the UK and the USA. This reverses the trend of child sexual abuse (CSA) demonstrated in family and community environments, where girls are more likely to be abused, although perpetrators are much more likely to be men across all settings. The question of gender in relation to the experience and management of CSA therefore requires further examination. In this article we investigate whether gender is a specific dimension of CSA in religious institutions, and specifically the Roman Catholic Church, by two methods. We begin by examining the

literature that addresses gender representation, religion and CSA in relation to three central evidence-based indicators: prevalence, disclosure and trauma impacts. Secondly, we link this discussion to a case study of the Catholic Church in Australia, where we identify specific patterns of gendered child violence. We ask the question: if such gendered forms of violence related to Catholic socialisation processes and if so by which specific mechanisms does Catholic culture produce the conditions that facilitate the sexual abuse of children? This article will explore these questions by looking at the ways CSA in Catholic institutions are gendered and how this produced particular forms of knowledge and truth. We argue that gender is a central organising principle in Catholic bureaucracy, culture and theology. The analysis identifies five central factors underpinning the reproduction of a discourse of power and knowledge normalizing gendered patterns of CSA and addresses a gap in current research by addressing gender representation as the central factor in the prevalence, disclosure and trauma of religiously based CSA.

Pereda, N., Contreras Taibo, L., Segura, A., & Maffioletti Celedón, F. (2022). An exploratory study on mental health, social problems and spiritual damage in victims of child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy and other perpetrators. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 31*(4), 393–411. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2022.2080142

The Catholic Church has faced a large number of complaints against its representatives for sexual crimes that involved children and adolescents as victims. The objective of this study was to characterize the dynamics of this type of event, its characteristics, and its effects in terms of mental health and social consequences, as well as the spiritual damage generated. The sample comprised 182 victims from Spain and Chile, divided into three mutually exclusive groups (n = 40 committed by a representative of the Catholic Church; n = 85 by a family member; n = 57 by a perpetrator outside the family and the Church). The results show that victims of child sexual abuse (CSA) by a representative of the Catholic Church and other perpetrators are similar in many respects (e.g., religiosity,

characteristics of the abuse, and mental health and social problems), but that the effects on religiosity are more serious for victims of the clergy, affecting their belief in God. Finally, the extreme decline in belief in God, due to CSA, is an important predictor for most mental health and social problems. Our results show the need to include the Catholic identity, faith and spirituality in the therapeutic context.

Russell, D. H., Stewart, J., & Higgins, D. J. (2022). Safeguarding in church: Children and young people's perceptions of safety in religious and other faith-based settings. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 38*(3-4), 4459-4485.  
DOI:10.1177/08862605221117548

Organizations that interact with children and young people have a duty of care to ensure the safety of those children and young people from any manner of abuse, particularly from child sexual abuse. Faith-based ("religious") organizations are of particular interest due to the number of victims/survivors speaking out about their experiences of grooming, child sexual abuse, and other forms of harm in religious organizations. Focusing on addressing the risks and improving safeguarding efforts, prevention activities benefit from giving children agency and a voice. We conducted a study using two focus groups with children and young people involved with two different Christian denominations. We conducted activities and led discussions regarding their views about safety in the context of the faith-based organization with which they engage. Children and young people described different potentially unsafe situations, their likely frequency, and the level of impact such situations would have from their own point of view. They also described how they thought adults in their faith-based organization would see them. Thematic analysis of the data supported four themes related to their sense of safety: concerning behavior of adults and other young people, fear of judgment by others, sense of or lack of empowerment due to power dynamics, and the importance of a sense of "familiarity." Visual comparisons of the data on scatterplots suggested differences not only in the level of impact and frequency of potentially unsafe situations between young people and

adults but also between the two denominations. Children and young people can provide a wealth of information regarding their safety concerns when involved in programs and services at faith-based organizations. Clergy and other faith-based organizational leaders should consider how the context in which young people are involved (including interdenominational and interfaith difference, as well as the diverse types of activities young people are involved with) can affect their safety concerns.

Zollner, H. (2022). [The Catholic church's responsibility in creating a safeguarding culture.](#) *The Person and the Challenges: The Journal of Theology, Education, Canon Law and Social Studies Inspired by Pope John Paul II*, 12(1), 5–21. DOI:10.15633/pch.4233

The safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adult persons is an intrinsic aspect of the mission that the Lord has entrusted the Church and it is the responsibility of all the faithful to fulfil it. Unfortunately, it is not possible to eradicate child abuse entirely as it is a human reality, but much can be done by creating a culture of safe space and safe relationships within the Church and beyond. The Catholic Church, as the oldest and biggest institution in the world and with its religious and moral values, has a special responsibility in preventing any kind of abuse, in protecting the most vulnerable, and furthermore, in creating safe spaces and safe relationships. Listening to victims and survivors of abuse who have been harmed in the Church or outside, is key for acting in a responsible, accountable, and transparent way.

Choruby-Whiteley, A., & Morrow, S. L. (2021). "I was praying for my very salvation from my sexual abuse": Experiences of sexual abuse survivors in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. *Women & Therapy*, 44(3-4), 292-318. DOI:10.1080/02703149.2021.1961436

Researchers have thoroughly documented the experiences of sexual abuse survivors; however, many complications may arise for adult survivors who are religious. To our

knowledge, there have been no previous studies regarding childhood sexual abuse survivors who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This qualitative research project sought to explore the questions, "What are the gendered messages of femininity that Latter-day Saint childhood sexual abuse survivors have received, and how have these messages impacted their healing from sexual abuse?" Fourteen participants were interviewed as part of a qualitative investigation in a semi-structured format with open-ended questions from an emergent grounded theory design. The researchers analyzed the interviews to reveal results that are grounded in participants' reported experiences. Six themes arose under the category of Harmful Cultural Lesson and Social Norms. An additional theme, Healing through Advocating for Change, presented alongside a theoretical framework of healing, explores the relationship between the harmful cultural messages that Latter-day Saint sexual abuse survivors internalize, the subsequent impact on a survivor's sense of self, and alternative trauma-informed lessons that lead to healing. The author(s) present these results along with the implications for therapists working with Latter-day Saint sexual abuse survivors, recommendations for church policy changes, and future research directions.

Dallam, S., Hamilton, M., & Glocker, S. (2021). Survey of the written child protection policies of the 32 US archdioceses. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 30*(7), 869-889. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2021.1938770

Amid considerable public scrutiny, Roman Catholic institutions in the United States have been called upon to address underlying organizational conditions that may facilitate child sex abuse and establish effective policies for early intervention and prevention. The development of child protection policies has largely been left to the discretion of local dioceses with little in the way of central oversight. This study examined the 32 U.S. archdioceses' written policies on child protection and maintaining a safe environment. We found 14 distinct policies spread across the archdioceses which fit into four general

categories or domains: (1) Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse; (2) Detection and Reporting of Abuse; (3) Response to Victims; and (4) Investigational Process and Response to Allegations of Abuse. Using a tool developed from a list of unique components selected from the better policies of all 32 archdioceses, we compared policies across archdioceses. On a group level, we found current policies to be inadequate. The average score for all 32 archdioceses was 100.9 out of 250 possible points or 40%. The range was 61 to 137 (SD 20.4). The variation and inconsistencies across multiple archdioceses within the U.S. reveal the need for the Catholic Church to establish evidence-based standards on appropriately and effectively addressing child sexual abuse within its dioceses. These standards should be based on empirically supported best practices and emerging consensus of experts on better practices for youth-serving organizations in relation to child abuse. This article points to parameters for consideration in developing such standards.

Dum, C. P., Socia, K. M., Long, B. L., & Yarrison, F. (2020). Would God forgive? Public attitudes toward sex offenders in places of worship. *Sexual Abuse, 32*(5), 567-590. DOI:10.1177/1079063219839498

Previous research has explored the impact of faith and religion on recidivism. However, it focused primarily on violent offenders, drug users, tax evaders, and so on. Missing is an examination of registered sex offenders (RSOs) and the role religion and religiosity play in facilitating reentry. Religiosity and religious organizations may play a role in increasing social bonds and reducing isolation in RSOs. In addition, being surrounded by a faith-based community could act as a catalyst for identity transformation from a RSO to a community member. Using a national online sample of U.S. adults, this research investigates individual's support of policies controlling sex offenders in religious communities and how demographic characteristics affect these views. Results suggest that Protestants and Other (non-Catholic) Christians are the most accepting of RSOs in

places of worship. In addition, the stronger an individual's faith, the less accepting they are of RSOs. Older, liberal, and educated respondents are more accepting of RSOs.

Harper, C. A., Perkins, C., & Johnson, D. (2020). Psychological factors influencing religious congregation members' reporting of alleged sexual abuse. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 26*(1), 129–144. DOI:10.1080/13552600.2019.1599453

The sexual abuse of children within religious institutions has become a topic of increasing public concern in recent decades. However, to date there has been little in the way of psychological analyses of the processes by which congregation members judge the credibility of alleged abuses, or whether they would intend to report such allegations to the police. In this study, we examined the roles of ingroup identity, moral foundations, and social dominance orientation on reporting intentions and allegation credibility assessments among Church of England congregation members (n = 454) and non-religious controls (n = 457). While there were few predictors of reporting intentions, we found that churchgoers were consistently more sceptical of allegations of abuse, with these trends being differentially moderated by ingroup identification, the endorsement of various moral impulses, and anti-egalitarianism. We discuss our data in light of ongoing attempts to improve reporting procedures within the Church.

Mendes, P., Pinskiar, M., McCurdy, S., & Averbukh, R. (2020). [Ultra-orthodox Jewish communities and child sexual abuse: A case study of the Australian Royal Commission and its implications for faith-based communities](#). *Children Australia, 45*(1), 14–20. DOI:10.1017/cha.2019.44

To date, little is known about manifestations of child sexual abuse (CSA) within ultra-orthodox Jewish communities both in Australia and abroad. There is a paucity of empirical studies on the prevalence of CSA within Jewish communities, and little information on the responses of Jewish community organisations, or the experiences of

Jewish CSA survivors and their families. This paper draws on a case study of two ultra-orthodox Jewish organisations from the recent Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to examine the religious and cultural factors that may inform Jewish communal responses to CSA. Attention is drawn to factors that render ultra-orthodox communities vulnerable to large-scale CSA, religious laws and beliefs that may influence the reporting of abuse to secular authorities, and the communal structures that may lead to victims rather than offenders being subjected to personal attacks and exclusion from the community. Commonalities are identified between ultra-orthodox Jews and other faith-based communities, and reforms suggested to improve child safety across religious groups.

Vieth, V. I. (2020). [Until the blood ran: A call to re-appraise the experience of child physical abuse in the life and works of Martin Luther](#). *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 47(4), 60–73.

Although Martin Luther described experiencing three egregious acts of child physical abuse, most Luther biographers ignore, excuse, minimize, or make light of this violence. The notable exception is Erik Erikson, whose psychohistory biography contended the reformation is largely the product of Luther's conflict with his father. Although many scholars rightly conclude that Erikson's analysis went too far, these same scholars fail to adequately address the potential impact of child abuse on Luther's theology, his own treatment of children, his views on child discipline, and his thoughts on education. To address these shortcomings in Luther scholarship, this article takes a fresh look at Luther's statements about being beaten and critiques the decision of Luther biographers to dismiss or minimize these statements. Lastly, the article advocates for a more balanced view of the childhood beatings of history's most prominent Protestant, and suggests that a deeper, more honest assessment of these beatings will yield meaningful insights into Luther and his theology.

Foley, T. (2019). Changing institutional culture in the wake of clerical abuse – The essentials of restorative and legal regulation. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 22(2), 171–187. DOI:10.1080/10282580.2019.1610943

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse completed its final report in December 2017 after five years of hearings. The Royal Commission was the culmination of pressure from a series of public inquiries about institutional sexual abuse and sustained advocacy from victims and survivor support groups. The Commission made recommendations designed to change institutional leadership, governance and culture. The challenge is to have that change embedded in institutional culture. This paper considers how this might be done in a specific institution, the Catholic Church given that more than two-thirds of reported abuse in faith-based institutions occurred within its ranks. Regulatory theory suggests effective regulation must be responsive to past institutional behaviour. In the case of the Church, the task is profound given its strong self-protective culture which has long shielded abusers. The form of regulation must provide a balance where criminal sanctions loom large in the background while redress processes proceed in the foreground to repair both the harm suffered by survivors and renew Church culture.

Hurcombe, R., Darling, A., Mooney, B., Ablett, G., Soares, C., King, S., & Brähler, V. (2019). [Truth Project thematic report: Child sexual abuse in the context of religious institutions](#). Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse.

This is the first publication in a series of thematic reports examining what victims and survivors have shared with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse ('the Inquiry') as part of the Truth Project about their experiences of child sexual abuse and the institutional context in which it occurred. It details the research findings in relation to experiences of sexual abuse that occurred in 'religious contexts', based on the location or perpetrator of the abuse. This includes both sexual abuse that has taken place in a religious institution and sexual abuse that has taken place in a different setting but where

the perpetrator was a member of the clergy or other staff affiliated with a religious institution (see section 1.2 for a more detailed discussion of our inclusion and exclusion criteria). The accounts in this report are from victims and survivors who came to the Truth Project between June 2016 and November 2018. The majority of participants reported sexual abuse by individuals from Anglican and Catholic Churches in England and Wales. However, such abuse within other Christian denominations and other religions – including the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Islam and Judaism – was also reported and is included in the analysis. The analysis was undertaken by members of the Inquiry’s Research Team between November 2018 and May 2019.

Raine, S., & Kent, S. A. (2019). The grooming of children for sexual abuse in religious settings: Unique characteristics and select case studies. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 48*, 180–189. DOI:10.1016/j.avb.2019.08.017

This article examines the sexual grooming of children and their caregivers in a wide variety of religious settings. We argue that unique aspects of religion facilitate institutional and interpersonal grooming in ways that often differ from forms of manipulation in secular settings. Drawing from Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism, and Seventh-day Adventism) and various sects (the Children of God, the Branch Davidians, the Fundamentalist Latter-day Saints, a Hindu ashram, and the Devadasis), we show how some religious institutions and leadership figures in them can slowly cultivate children and their caregivers into harmful and illegal sexual activity. A number of uniquely religious characteristics facilitate this cultivation, which includes: theodicies of legitimation; power, patriarchy, obedience, protection, and reverence towards authority figures; victims’ fears about spiritual punishments; and scriptural uses to justify adult-child sex.

Rashid, F., & Barron, I. (2019). Why the focus of clerical child sexual abuse has largely remained on the Catholic church amongst other non-Catholic Christian denominations and religions. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 28*(5), 564-585. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2018.1563261

The current study considers reasons for the consistent focus of academic research and mainstream media on clerical child sexual abuse (cCSA) largely within the Roman Catholic Church, seeming to ignore cCSA in other Christian denominations and religions. This study includes an analysis of traditional mainstream media and case reports on cCSA in non-Catholic churches and other religious faiths. The authors highlight the inadequacy of research and identify a wide range of gaps in this so far neglected area. Commonalities of cCSA and institutional responses are identified across denominations and religions, and reasons for the apparent over focus on the Catholic Church are discussed. The main potential reasons identified were: (a) the centralized nature of the Church's universal organizational stature and management structure; (b) the anti-Catholic political and media bias in Protestant-dominated developed countries; (c) secular legal systems with access to powerful lawyers and insurance companies to locate responsibility at organizational level in order to seek compensation and finally; (d) the organized institutional power exercisable by respective bishops to silence victims. Future research needs to move beyond analysis of existing academic literature, press, and case review reports to comparative empirical studies across denominations and religions.

Vieth, V. I. (2019). [Child abuse and the Lutheran confessional: A call to elevate Christ's teachings on children above church traditions](#). *Currents in Theology and Mission, 46*(3), 50-55.

Examining the concept of the Lutheran confessional as found in the *Book of Concord*, as well as contemporary Lutheran writings on receiving a confession about child abuse, this article argues that Holy Scripture, particularly the words of Jesus and the writings of Paul,

take precedent over the church tradition of keeping the confidence of a penitent. In a case of child abuse, a faithful reading of the words of Jesus necessitates reporting abuse to the authorities in order to protect the child. A report is also in the best interests of offenders, many of whom will be unable to reform without civil and criminal justice interventions, and some of whom use the confessional as a divine license to continue to hurt children.

Briggs, S., & Whittaker, A. (2018). Protecting children from faith-based abuse through accusations of witchcraft and spirit possession: Understanding contexts and informing practice. *British Journal of Social Work, 48*(8), 2157–2175.  
DOI:10.1093/bjsw/bcx15

Faith-based abuse relating to the practice of witchcraft and spirit possession is a controversial and not well-understood form of child abuse. From its 'discovery' in the UK as a cause of abuse, serious injury and death for children, in 2000 to the present, the recent history of witchcraft and spirit possession involves some high-profile cases, involving serious harm and death for some children, which attracted significant publicity. This article reviews research and commentary, including grey literature, and the emerging policy framework. It discusses the underpinning relationship between faith-based practices and abuse, and takes a post-colonial perspective to discuss the social explanations for the continuing practice of witchcraft and spirit possession in contemporary society. These discussions are then shown to inform practice. Practice priorities are informed assessment of suspected cases, through early and statutory interventions, care for survivors and an important focus on community engagement to prevent this form of child abuse.

Denney, A. S., Kerley, K. R., & Gross, N. G. (2018). [Child sexual abuse in protestant Christian congregations: A descriptive analysis of offense and offender characteristics](#). *Religions*, 9(1), 27. DOI:10.3390/rel9010027

Utilizing data from 326 cases of alleged child sexual abuse that occurred at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian congregations, this study examines demographic and contextual characteristics of alleged child sexual abuse that took place within the most prevalent religious environment in the United States. Research questions are addressed in this study including what type of child sexual abuse most commonly occurs at or through activities provided by Protestant Christian congregations and where do such offenses physically take place? Additionally, who are the offenders and what role(s) do they assume in the congregations? We find that the overwhelming majority of offenses were contact offenses that occurred on church premises or at the offender's home, and that most offenders were white male pastors or youth ministers who were approximately 40 years in age. We conclude with policy implications and recommendations for future research.

Harper, C. A., & Perkins, C. (2018). Reporting child sexual abuse within religious settings: Challenges and future directions. *Child Abuse Review*, 27(1), 30-41.  
DOI:10.1002/car.2484

The sexual abuse of children within religious settings is an issue that has gained increased popular and professional attention over the past two decades. Various reports have highlighted the scale of such abuse, along with shortcomings in reporting practices. In this article, we outline some contemporary research that sought to understand the psychology that underpins variable reporting practices. We set out two conceptual frameworks that have the potential to help to explain such practices: system justification theory and moral foundations theory. Further, we describe how these frameworks could be adopted in research moving forward in order to make sense of the ways in which members of religious groups respond to allegations of child sexual abuse within their

institutions. We close the article by arguing that by gaining a deeper understanding of the psychology underlying reporting practices, it may be possible to communicate more effectively about child sexual abuse within religious institutions, and therefore encourage more widespread reporting of allegations before more children are harmed.

Rashid, F., & Barron, I. (2018). The Roman Catholic church: A centuries old history of awareness of clerical child sexual abuse (from the First to the 19th century). *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 27*(7), 778–792. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2018.1491916

Debates in international forums and in mainstream media on the role, responsibility, liability, and response of ecclesiastical authorities of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) toward clerical child sexual abuse (cCSA) fail to take into account the historical roots and awareness of the problem. Reports also fail to mention the historic organizational laws RCC developed over centuries. In contrast, RCC documents evidence that the Catholic Church not only carried century's old history of cCSA, but also repeatedly condemned cCSA by successive papal authorities, organizational laws, and institutional management mechanisms. During the first millennium, however, church laws remained confined to the bookshelves and were not converted into appropriate management policies and infrastructural models. This was largely due to the absence of a central administrative organizational structure, which developed later in the 12th century, following the Second Council of Lateran (1139) when the Papacy asserted its authority to establish administrative control over the organizational church. It was only then that management policies started to be framed and institutional structures enacted to deal more appropriately with cCSA from the 14th to 20th centuries. Despite this, RCC developed a culture of secrecy using clandestine organizational management models and institutional laws prescribed in 1568, 1622, 1741, 1866, 1922, and 1962 which aimed to manage cCSA. The current study traces reported cCSA as far back as the first century

and critically examines the organizational laws, and institutional policies developed by RCC to address clerical sexual misconduct up to the end of the 19th century.

Bartholomew, C. P. (2017). [Exorcising the clergy privilege](#). *Virginia Law Review*, 103(6), 1015-1075.

Katzenstein, D., & Fontes, L. A. (2017). Twice silenced: The underreporting of child sexual abuse in Orthodox Jewish communities. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26(6), 752-767. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2017.1336505

Child sexual abuse remains an underreported crime throughout the world, despite extensive research and resources dedicated both to improving investigative techniques and helping children disclose their experiences. The discovery of rampant cover-ups within the Catholic Church has exposed some of the ways religious and cultural issues can impede reporting to authorities. This article examines specific factors that contribute to the underreporting of child sexual abuse within Orthodox Jewish communities. It also explores ways in which these communities have handled child sexual abuse reporting in the past and describes recent progress. Implications are offered for CSA prevention, detection, and recovery in Orthodox Jewish communities as well as other minority religious groups.

Oakley, L., Kinmond, K., Humphreys, J., & Dioum, M. (2017). Practitioner and communities' awareness of CALFB: Child abuse linked to faith or belief. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 72, 276-282. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.08.024

This paper reports the results of an online survey which aimed to explore practitioners' and faith community groups' awareness and understanding of child abuse linked to faith or belief (CALFB) and to identify their further training needs in this area. The survey was

founded in the work of the national working group for CALFB; a multi-agency response group committed to raising knowledge and awareness of this form of child abuse. Despite the relatively small number of recorded cases, CALFB continues to be a matter of concern to professionals and faith communities in the UK and beyond. 1,362 respondents comprising of frontline practitioners, faith and community group members completed the survey. A mixed-method analysis of the data illustrates a wide-range understanding of the term CALFB and disagreement about whether this is a specific form of child abuse. The results also indicate a relationship between confidence levels in identifying and responding to CALFB and specific training in this area. There is a call for specialised training to be more readily available. Further work is needed to develop a toolkit to identify indicators of CALFB and effective response pathways together with research across communities. The current research is timely and important in providing a foundation on which to build more effective identification of cases, policy and intervention.

Anderson, J. (2016). Socialization processes and clergy offenders. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 25(8), 846–865. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2016.1241333

This article uses feminist theory to investigate how the socialization processes used to maintain the clergy community in the Roman Catholic Church contributes to a vulnerability in some clergy for sexually abusing children. This vulnerability is identified first in an examination of the literature on the impact of socialization processes on clergy offenders between the 1960s and 1980s. A comparison is then made with the implications of the apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, which provides a theological basis to clergy formation. The article argues that the document works to ensure a continuity of socialization processes that not only have been shown to create a vulnerability for committing child sexual abuse but compound existing vulnerabilities. The article concludes that constraints produced by the preservation of a hegemonic masculinity

and patriarchy retain a threat of violence against children and require recommended reforms.

Minto, K., Hornsey, M. J., Gillespie, N., Healy, K., & Jetten, J. (2016). [A social identity approach to understanding responses to child sexual abuse allegations](#). *PloS One*, *11*(4), e0153205. DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0153205

Two studies investigated the role of group allegiances in contributing to the failure of institutions to appropriately respond to allegations of child sexual abuse. In Study 1, 601 participants read a news article detailing an allegation of child sexual abuse against a Catholic Priest. Catholics were more protective of the accused—and more skeptical of the accuser—than other participants, an effect that was particularly pronounced among strongly identified Catholics. In Study 2 (N = 404), the tendency for Catholics to be more protective of the accused and more skeptical of the accuser than non-Catholics was replicated. Moreover, these effects held independently of the objective likelihood that the accused was guilty. Overall, the data show that group loyalties provide a psychological motivation to disbelieve child abuse allegations. Furthermore, the people for whom this motivation is strongest are also the people who are most likely to be responsible for receiving and investigating allegations: highly identified ingroup members. The findings highlight the psychological mechanisms that may limit the ability of senior Church figures to conduct impartial investigations into allegations of child abuse within the Church.

Bottoms, B. L., Goodman, G. S., Tolou-Shams, M., Diviak, K. R., & Shaver, P. R. (2015). Religion-related child maltreatment: A profile of cases encountered by legal and social service agencies. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, *33*(4), 561–579. DOI:10.1002/bsl.2192

Religion can foster, facilitate, and be used to justify child maltreatment. Yet religion-related child abuse and neglect have received little attention from social scientists. We

examined 249 cases of religion-related child maltreatment reported to social service agencies, police departments, and prosecutors' offices nationwide. We focused on cases involving maltreatment perpetrated by persons with religious authority, such as ministers and priests; the withholding of medical care for religious reasons; and abusive attempts to rid a child of supposed evil. By providing a descriptive statistical profile of the major features of these cases, we illustrate how these varieties of religion-related child maltreatment occur, who the victims and perpetrators are, and how religion-related child abuse and neglect are reported and processed by the social service and criminal justice systems. We end with a call for greater research attention to these important offenses against children.

Calkins, C., Fargo, J., Jeglic, E., & Terry, K. (2015). Blessed be the children: A case control study of sexual abusers in the Catholic church. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 33(4), 580–594. DOI:10.1002/bsl.2193

Individuals working in churches and other youth-serving institutions have a unique level of access to children, yet the problem of sexual abuse in institutional settings has received scant research attention. To address this gap, we analyzed data from a large sample of clergy (N = 1,121) and applied a social-ecological model of offending to identify risk factors for sexual abuse perpetration. Using a case-control study design that compared clergy sexual abusers with three control groups of clergy, this study focuses specifically on individual-, relationship-, and community-level factors associated with a higher risk of abuse in professional populations. Findings revealed that clergy sexual abusers tended to have more truncated pre-seminary dating histories, and that their dating and sexual partners were more likely to have been male than female. Self-reported sexual abuse history was associated with a greater likelihood of sexual abuse perpetration among clergy. Clergy abusers tended to be more involved with youth and adolescents in their ministries; however, they were observed to relate less well to youth

and adolescents than their clergy counterparts. Given widespread changes in our cultural understanding of abuse as well as more specific changes in the organizational approach to seminary education, these differences underscore the role that youth-serving institutions and society can have in the primary prevention of child sexual abuse.

Moore, S. E., Robinson, M. A., Dailey, A., & Thompson, C. (2015). Suffering in silence: Child sexual molestation and the Black church: If God don't help me who can I turn to?. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 25(2), 147-157. DOI:10.1080/10911359.2014.956962

The invasion by another of a child's inner self causes greater damage to the soul than perhaps any other type of abuse. Each year an estimated 90,000 children are victims of child sexual abuse. Many social institutions that are designed to help in healthy child development have failed to protect children from sexual abuse. The Black church is a major institution within the African American community that provides a plethora of supports for the community. However, it has also come under recent scrutiny for its failure to protect its children from sexual predators from within. The authors of this article discuss the role of the Black church, give theories to explain child sexual molestation, and make recommendations to church leaders and others for prevention and intervention of this problem. Implications for churches, human service providers, and research are also discussed.

Terry, K. J. (2015). Child sexual abuse within the Catholic church: A review of global perspectives. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 39(2), 139-154. DOI:10.1080/01924036.2015.1012703

Child sexual abuse by Catholic priests is a global issue. Reports of abuse proliferated in the US in 2002, giving the appearance that it was an American phenomenon. However, by 2010, it was clear that abuse in the Catholic Church had affected countries around the

world. Scholars in the US have published reports evaluating the nature, scope, and causes of the problem. Similarly, public inquiries and commissions have investigated the crises in other western and English-speaking countries, and research is ongoing. The reports have produced similar findings and recommendations for preventing abuse in the future, including better education and training about abuse; the need to respond quickly and thoroughly to victim-survivors; transparency in response to abuse; and coordinated responses with civil authorities.

Böhm, B., Zollner, H., Fegert, J. M., & Liebhardt, H. (2014). Child sexual abuse in the context of the Roman Catholic church: A review of literature from 1981–2013. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 23*(6), 635–656. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2014.929607

Child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church has been increasingly recognized as a problem not limited to individual institutions. Recent inquiry commission reports provide substantial information on offense dynamics, but their conclusions have not been synthesized with empirical research to date. The aim of this systematic literature review was to bring together key findings and identify gaps in the evidence base. The three main focus points were (a) types of publications and methodology used, (b) frequency information on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, (c) individual factors in offending, and (d) institutional factors in offending. It was found that reports, legal assessments, and research on child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church provide extensive descriptive and qualitative information for five different countries. This includes individual psychological factors (static risk predictors, multiple trajectories) and institutional factors (opportunity, social dynamics) as well as prevalence rates illustrating a high “dark figure” of child sexual abuse.

Collins, C. M., O'Neill-Arana, M. R., Fontes, L. A., & Ossege, J. M. (2014). Catholicism and childhood sexual abuse: Women's coping and psychotherapy. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 23*(5), 519-537. DOI:10.1080/10538712.2014.918071

The long-term effects of child sexual abuse include numerous psychological, social, and behavioral difficulties in women survivors, ranging from poor self-esteem and depression to sexual disorders and posttraumatic stress disorder. The role that religious beliefs may play in the difficulties these women suffer has been largely unexplored. This qualitative study explored women's experience of healing within the context of Catholicism. Interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of eight women raised as Catholics who reported child sexual abuse and who had participated in at least two years of psychotherapy. Results suggest that Catholic identity can both compound and relieve the suffering many women experience in healing from child sexual abuse. Participants related that their Catholicism was rarely addressed during psychotherapy. These findings have implications for clinicians working with Catholic survivors of child sexual abuse.

Lueger-Schuster, B., Kantor, V., Weindl, D., Knefel, M., Moy, Y., Butollo, A., Jagsch, R., & Glück, T. (2014). Institutional abuse of children in the Austrian Catholic church: Types of abuse and impact on adult survivors' current mental health. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 38*(1), 52-64. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.07.013

The aim of this study was to explore the nature and dimensions of institutional child abuse (IA) by the Austrian Catholic Church and to investigate the current mental health of adult survivors. Data were collected in two steps. First, documents of 448 adult survivors of IA (M = 55.1 years, 75.7% men) who had disclosed their abuse history to a victim protection commission were collected. Different types of abuse, perpetrator characteristics, and family related risk factors were investigated. Second, a sample of 185 adult survivors completed the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL-C) and the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). Participants reported an enormous diversity of acts of violent physical, sexual, and emotional abuse that had occurred in their childhood. The majority of adult

survivors (83.3%) experienced emotional abuse. Rates of sexual (68.8%) and physical abuse (68.3%) were almost equally high. The prevalence of PTSD showed clinically relevant symptoms in at least one 1 of 10 symptom dimensions. No specific pre-IA influence was found to influence the development of PTSD in later life (e.g. poverty, domestic violence). However, survivors with PTSD reported a significantly higher total of family related risk factors. We conclude that childhood IA includes a wide spectrum of violent acts, and has a massive negative impact on the current mental health of adult survivors. We address the long-term effects of these traumatic experiences in addition to trauma re-activation as both pose challenges for professionals working with survivors.

Perry-Burney, G., Thomas, N. D., & McDonald, T. L. (2014). Rural child sexual abuse in the African American church community: A forbidden topic. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 24(8), 986–995.  
DOI:10.1080/10911359.2014.953413

The church as an institution in the African American community has played a vital role from slavery to the present day, serving as an oasis from the maladies of the world. However, the African American church is not immune from sex abuse scandals. This article provides statistics, descriptive case studies, coping strategies for survivors of sexual abuse, solutions for reducing the incidence of sexual abuse in the church, and implications for social work practice and policies.

Robinson, M., & Hanmer, S. (2014). Engaging religious communities to protect children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation: Partnerships require analysis of religious virtues and harms. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 38(4), 600–611.  
DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.03.018

This article aims to provide a framework for analysis on key issues, challenges, and opportunities related to working with religious communities in addressing child abuse

and neglect. Strategies and practical guidance on seeking stronger relationships between child protection specialists and religious communities are also highlighted, and examples of successful program approaches are provided.

Parkinson, P. (2013). [Suffer the teenage children: Child sexual abuse in church communities](#). *Sydney Law School Research Paper, 13(9)*. DOI:10.2139/ssrn.2216264

In recent years, an increasing amount of attention has been given to the problem of child sexual abuse in church communities. While all churches, and indeed all communities which care for children, have had experience of this problem, most attention has been paid to the problem of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. This paper, given at Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion in January 2013, examines the issue of child sexual abuse in church communities, drawing particularly on Australian data. Most victims of child sexual abuse both in the Catholic and Anglican churches in Australia, are adolescent boys. This points to the importance of opportunity for abuse to occur, since priests and other ministers are more likely to have opportunities to be alone with teenage boys than with girls. While there are some similar patterns in terms of victims' age and gender, the incidence of abuse by Catholic clergy and religious appears to be many times that of ministers and pastoral staff in other Christian churches, and it may well be significantly higher than in the general population. The paper explores the reasons why this may be so. It also examines how churches in Australia have responded to the problem of child sexual abuse. Concerns about systemic failures in the response of the Catholic Church in particular have led to the establishment of a Royal Commission in 2013 which will examine child abuse in institutional settings across the country.

Gilligan, P. (2012). Contrasting narratives on responses to victims and survivors of clerical abuse in England and Wales: Challenges to Catholic church discourse. *Child Abuse Review*, 21(6), 414–426. DOI:10.1002/car.2251

Accounts of the Catholic Church's response to those disclosing sexual abuse by clergy to diocesan safeguarding commissions (formerly child protection commissions) in England and Wales are analysed and compared. The accounts given and the conclusions reached by the Church and those it employs or has commissioned are considered alongside the experiences reported by survivors. The contrasts between these narratives are discussed using techniques underpinned by critical discourse analysis and highlighting service user perspectives. Reports for the period to 2010 and published in 2011 by the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission and Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors are discussed in detail, with the resulting analysis of the narratives emerging arguably reflecting a broader discourse. It is suggested that, despite attempts to present the situation differently, the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales continues to be hampered in its efforts to respond sensitively to the needs of those who have been abused, because, as an institution, it also continues to serve conflicting legitimacy communities, and that, as a result, it risks further alienating those victims and survivors who have been led to expect that their needs will be prioritised over the financial interests and reputation of the institution.

Kent, S. A. (2012). [Religious justifications for child sexual abuse in cults and alternative religions](#). *International Journal of Cultic Studies*, 3, 49-73.

This article identifies eight religiously colored justifications that pedophiles have used to excuse child sexual abuse in cults and alternative religions operating in the West. These ideologies are a) Western scriptural patriarchalism; b) Western patriarchal incest; c) patriarchalism and polygamous child brides; d) millenarianism; e) antinomianism; f) sex as the means to salvation; g) sex as salvation; and h) levelling all forms of sex as equally

fallen. By anchoring abuse within theologically based justifications that are readily available in one or more cultic or alternative religious groups, we gain insight into how sexual exploitation becomes legitimized within societal subgroups. Under leaders' directions, these subgroups receive theologies that enable forms of child sexual abuse to seem normative because they appear to have divine justification or support.

Parkinson, P. N., Oates, R. K., & Jayakody, A. A. (2012). [Child sexual abuse in the Anglican church of Australia](#). *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(5), 553-570.  
DOI:10.1080/10538712.2012.689424

This article reports on a retrospective study of cases of child sexual abuse complaints made against clergy, other employed pastoral staff, and volunteers in the Anglican Church of Australia between 1990 and 2008. There were 191 allegations of sexual abuse made by 180 complainants against 135 individuals. Twenty-seven of those 135 had more than one complaint made against them. Three-quarters of all complainants were male. The most likely explanation for the large proportion of abused males is that the church gives many more opportunities for abusers to be alone with boys than with girls. Prevention strategies need to focus on reducing the opportunities for abuse to occur as well as strategies concerning the recruitment of professional staff and volunteers.

Vieth, V. I. (2012). [What would Walther do? Applying law and gospel to victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse](#). *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 40(4), 257-273. DOI:10.1177/009164711204000402

Counselors and theologians failing to understand the dynamics of child sexual abuse cases often apply the concept of law and gospel incorrectly. When this happens, perpetrators are emboldened to offend again and many victims leave the church. To assist spiritual counselors in avoiding this pitfall, I provide an overview of the dynamics present in many cases of sexual abuse and the impact this has on children physically,

emotionally, and spiritually. I also discuss the characteristics of many sex offenders and the efforts offenders make to manipulate both the victim and the church. In determining the proper application of law and gospel to victims and offenders, I discuss the law and gospel treatise of C.F.W. Walther. In doing so, I include examples of Walther's application of law and gospel in cases of domestic violence and sexual exploitation. Finally, I include practical suggestions for psychotherapists and theologians in applying law and gospel to victims and to perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

Lopiansky, R. A., Berman, R. Y., & Eisen, R. E. (2011). [Child sexual abuse in the Frum community—An overview](#). *Dialogue*, 7, 10–76.

This article is the product of extensive research based on interviews with key professionals, Rabbonim, and activists who deal with CSA, both in the U.S. and in Israel, within the frum communities. The goal is to present clear information based on their responses, as well as information gathered from empirical and academic research and professional literature.

Tchividjian, B. J., & Vieth, V. (2011). [When the child abuser has a Bible: Investigating child maltreatment sanctioned or condoned by a religious leader](#). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*, 53.

This article contains seventeen tips to assist law enforcement officers and other multidisciplinary team members investigating cases of child abuse condoned and, in some cases, actually sanctioned by a pastor or other church leader. The authors recognize this issue may arise in many religious contexts. However, this paper is primarily focused on abusive practices taking place in some Christian environments, and is based on the authors work in investigating or prosecuting abuse within these institutions.

Coughlin, J. J. (2009). [Canon law and the clergy sex abuse crisis: The failure of the rule of law](#). *Notre Dame Legal Studies Paper*, 9(21). DOI:10.2139/ssrn.1397584

This article discusses antinomian and legalistic approaches to canon law. Specifically, it explores these approaches to canon law by ecclesiastical authorities in dealing with the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests in the United States. When canon law functions properly, it maintains the balance between law and spirit in the life of the church. In the United States, the bishops' response to the problem of clergy sexual abuse of minors has combined antinomian and legalistic trends that have diminished the rule of canon law. If bishops had fulfilled their duty to abide by the rule of law, especially in the cases involving clergy who are serial child abusers, they would have communicated to victims, clergy and all concerned that church authorities were taking appropriate steps to protect children. In hindsight, it is easy to see that the bishops' focus on the psychological approach to the exclusion of the canonical has resulted in great injury. The clarity of hindsight, however, ought not result in blame and negativity but open the way for a more hopeful future. An important aspect of responding to the present crisis must entail re-commitment to the rule of law. No law or policy can eradicate sin from the fallen nature of the human situation, including that of the human beings who comprise the priesthood. The proper balance of law and spirit, however, can dispose injured individuals and communities to retrieve a sense of justice that facilitates healing and forgiveness.

Firestone, P., Moulden, H. M., & Wexler, A. F. (2009). Clerics who commit sexual offenses: Offender, offense, and victim characteristics. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 18(4), 442-454. DOI:10.1080/10538710903035305

The aim of this investigation was to undertake an exploratory analysis of clerics who sexually offend and the circumstances related to these offenses. Thirty-three adult male religious leaders who had been charged with a sexual offense against a child or adolescent were included in the study. This study examined descriptive information about

offenders, their victims, as well as characteristics of the crimes. Notable trends included the following: religious leaders tended to offend against boys living with both parents, the offense often took place at the clergy's residence, and the offense involved fondling the victim. The study also compared offenders with single versus multiple victims on crime variables and differences were noted with respect to victim access.

Walker, D. F., Reid, H. W., O'Neill, T., & Brown, L. (2009). Changes in personal religion/spirituality during and after childhood abuse: A review and synthesis. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1(2), 130–145. DOI:10.1037/a0016211.

Psychologists have begun to consider the potential role of traumatic experiences on the victim's spirituality and religiousness as well as the role personal religious and spiritual faith might have in recovery from abuse. In this review, the authors were particularly interested in these issues as they pertain to childhood abuse. The authors identified 34 studies of child abuse as they relate to spirituality and religiosity that included information on a total of 19,090 participants. The studies were classified according to both the form of abuse and the form of religiousness or spirituality that were examined. The majority of studies indicated a decline in religiousness or spirituality or a combination of both growth and decline. Seven studies gave preliminary indications that religiousness/spirituality moderate the development of posttraumatic symptoms or symptoms associated with other disorders. The authors discuss implications for both therapy and future research.

Flynn, K. A. (2008). In their own voices: Women who were sexually abused by members of the clergy. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 17(3-4), 216-237. DOI:10.1080/10538710802329684

Women remain perhaps the forgotten majority of persons to survive clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse. The impact of this abuse of women has been largely overlooked. Through

a qualitative exploration of narratives from semistructured interviews of 25 women sexually abused by clergy (18 as adults and 7 as children), this study examined how the women experienced symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Consideration is given to clergy-specific factors related to CPSA. Other considerations included intensified captivity experiences for many and extreme isolation related to nonexistent “contexts” for validation and support. A change in personal spirituality among many subjects from structured traditional religious practice to spirituality strongly dependent on interpersonal and relational factors is also considered.

Fogler, J. M., Shipherd, J. C., Rowe, E., Jensen, J., & Clarke, S. (2008). A theoretical foundation for understanding clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 17*(3-4), 301-328. DOI:10.1080/10538710802329874

Incorporating elements from broadband theories of psychological adaptation to extreme adversity, including Summit's (1983) Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome, Finkelhor and Browne's (1986) Traumagenic Dynamics Model of sexual abuse, and Pyszczynski and colleagues' (1997) Terror Management Theory, this paper proposes a unified theoretical model of clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse for future research. The model conceptualizes clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse as the convergence of interactive processes between the clergy-perpetrator, the parishioner-survivor, and the religious community.

Isely, P. J., Isely, P., Freiburger, J., & McMackin, R. (2008). In their own voices: A qualitative study of men abused as children by Catholic clergy. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 17*(3-4), 201-215. DOI:10.1080/10538710802329668

This study examines the impact of child sexual molestation on men assaulted as children by Catholic clergy. In-depth interviews were used to conduct a qualitative analysis of how

clergy-perpetrated childhood sexual abuse affected the adult psychological and/or psychosocial functioning of nine men. Subjects were selected in coordination with a nationally recognized advocacy group established for victims of clergy abuse, The Survivor Network of those Abused by Priests. The study found that the sexual abuse acted as a developmental insult and resulted in systemic influences throughout the victims' lives. The article concludes with considerations for treatment.

Mercado, C. C., Tallon, J. A., & Terry, K. J. (2008). Persistent sexual abusers in the Catholic church: An examination of characteristics and offense patterns. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35(5), 629-642. DOI:10.1177/0093854808314389

This study aims to enhance understanding of clergy offending patterns through a comparison of low-rate and high-rate clergy offenders. Data for these re-analyses are derived from 3,674 cases from the Nature and Scope of Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church. This article compares those clerics who had just one allegation with those who had a moderate (2 to 3), high (4 to 9), or exceptionally high (10-plus) number of allegations of sexual abuse. Findings reveal that the 3.7% (n =137) who had 10 or more victims accounted for a disproportionate 24.8% of the abuse. Priests with the most victims began perpetrating offenses at an earlier age and were more likely to have male victims than those who abused fewer victims. The importance of research addressing the causes and situational correlates of sexual offending by priests, as well as the need for more refined management strategies, are discussed.

Neustein, A., & Leshner, M. (2008). A single-case study of rabbinic sexual abuse in the Orthodox Jewish community. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 17(3-4), 270-289. DOI:10.1080/10538710802329783

This paper considers a case of sexual abuse allegedly perpetrated by a rabbi within an Orthodox Jewish community. The material is drawn from public records and interviews

conducted with the family of the reported victim and others involved in the matter. Consideration is given to judicial procedures unique to the traditional Jewish community and how such procedures, while developed to foster justice within the Jewish community, at times may interfere with secular criminal procedures.

Pargament, K. I., Murray-Swank, N. A., & Mahoney, A. (2008). Problem and solution: The spiritual dimension of clergy sexual abuse and its impact on survivors. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 17*(3-4), 397-420. DOI:10.1080/10538710802330187

In this paper, we offer a way to understand the spiritual dimension of clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse. Spirituality is defined as a search for the sacred—a process of discovery, conservation, and transformation that evolves over the lifespan. We describe the ways in which clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse impacts negatively on the individual's search for the sacred and the ways in which spirituality can serve as a valuable resource for survivors. We then consider how clinicians can draw on the client's spirituality as a source of solutions to problems and how clinicians can address the spiritual problems raised by clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse. Perhaps the greatest challenge for mental health professionals is to become better acquainted with the multifaceted nature of spiritual life.

Smith, M. L., Rengifo, A. F., & Vollman, B. K. (2008). Trajectories of abuse and disclosure: Child sexual abuse by Catholic priests. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 35*(5), 570-582. DOI:10.1177/0093854808314340

The distribution of the incidents of sexual abuse by Catholic priests in the United States (event structure) and the reports of these abuse events (reporting structure) present two distinct trajectories, confounding existing individual-level research results. Data from an institutional census of records of abuse between 1950 and 2002 show a steady increase in cases through the late 1970s and early 1980s, followed by a surge in reporting in the mid-1990s and again in 2002. These patterns are stable throughout all regions of the

Catholic Church in the United States. Rather than analyze the abuse or reporting from a conventionally individual, psychological framework, this research reframes the analyses for the event structure and the reporting of abuse by priests.

Terry, K. J. (2008). Stained glass: The nature and scope of child sexual abuse in the Catholic church. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35(5), 549–569.  
DOI:10.1177/0093854808314339

This article presents the results of the Nature and Scope of Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests from 1950 to 2002. Ninety-seven percent of dioceses (representing 99% of priests) and 64% of religious communities (representing 83% of religious priests) responded to the request for data. Findings showed that 4,392 priests (4%) had allegations of abuse, 10,667 victims made allegations, and the Church paid \$572.5 million for legal and treatment fees and as compensation to the victims (more than \$1.3 billion to date). The study also provided information on the circumstances of the abuse (e.g., types of sexual acts, location, duration), the offenders (e.g., year of ordination, age, ministry duties, other behavioral problems), the victims (e.g., age and gender, family situation), and the dioceses (e.g., differences in abuse rates by region and population size). Importance of these results for policy and practice is discussed.

Terry, K. J. (2008). Understanding the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic church: Challenges with prevention policies. *Victims and Offenders*, 3(1), 31–44.  
DOI:10.1080/15564880701750482

Child sexual abuse by Catholic priests was recognized as a crisis in 2002, and in response the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. At the time little was known about clergy abusers, their victims, or the situations regarding their abusive behavior. John Jay College researchers published two reports on the nature and scope of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests

that provided descriptive information about this problem. This article provides descriptive information about clergy abusers—including demographics, victim choice, grooming behavior, duration of abusive behavior, and issues related to the reporting of offenses by victims. Policy implications are discussed based upon the comparison of clergy to nonclergy abusers. As any population, effective prevention policies are challenging to implement due to the interaction of many variables related to the abuse process.

White, M. D., & Terry, K. J. (2008). Child sexual abuse in the Catholic church: Revisiting the rotten apples explanation. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35(5), 658-678.  
DOI:10.1177/0093854808314470

The Catholic Church response to its sexual abuse crisis and how the problem should be addressed parallels the “rotten apple” assertions of police deviance. The rotten apple theory, however, does not fully explain police deviance, as there are often also structural explanations. This article employs Kappeler, Sluder, and Alpert’s (1998) police deviance framework to characterize and understand the Catholic Church sex abuse scandal, drawing specific comparisons to the intentional use of excessive force by police. Though the analogy has limitations, there are similarities at both the individual and organizational levels, particularly because the Church has implemented accountability mechanisms similar to the police. The article concludes with a discussion of lessons the Church can learn from the police organization as they seek to prevent, control, and effectively respond to sexual abuse of children by their clergy.

Dale, K. A., & Alpert, J. L. (2007). Hiding behind the cloth: Child sexual abuse and the Catholic church. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 16(3), 59-74.  
DOI:10.1300/J070v16n03\_04

The existence of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church has shocked many. In this article, the authors review the history of child sexual abuse in the church, the recent events

that brought this tragedy into societal consciousness, and the efforts by the church to conceal the abuse. Two sources of empirical literature, the general psychological writing on priest sex abuse and the psychoanalytic literature, on child sexual abuse are compared. Both sources of literature seek explanation for priests' child sexual abuse within the structure and culture of the church rather than viewing the priest as a "typical" sex predator. The authors argue that, in fact, the guilty priests are child predators who differ little from other child predators.

Wolfe, D. A., Francis, K. J., & Straatman, A.-L. (2006). Child abuse in religiously-affiliated institutions: Long-term impact on men's mental health. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30(2), 205–212. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.08.015

The study objective was to describe the long-term impact of physical and sexual abuse of boys by someone in a trusting, non-familial relationship. This clinical study reports on the psychological functioning of men (N = 76) with substantiated claims against a residential religiously-affiliated institution for multiple and severe incidents of sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse during childhood. The abuse was perpetrated by several adults in positions of authority and trust at the institution. Each participant received a clinical interview and was administered psychological tests and a structured interview for DSM-IV diagnoses. The same clinician completed all of the assessments. DSM-IV criteria were met for current PTSD (42%), alcohol (21%), and mood-related disorders (25%). Over one-third of the sample suffered chronic sexual problems, and over one half had a history of criminal behavior. The clinical findings provide direction for assessing victims of historical abuse, and underscore the importance of awareness, prevention, and treatment needs for those who have been abused in institutional settings. Conclusions are limited due to participants' involvement in civil action, unknown pre-existing conditions, and the lack of a suitable comparison group.

Finkelhor, D. (2003). [The legacy of the clergy abuse scandal](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 27(11), 1225–1229. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2003.09.011

Discusses the clergy abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. It is noted that the Catholic Church abuse scandal will certainly end up reinforcing the part that litigation plays in our societal response to child maltreatment. Seeing the courage, the impact on those responsible for the offenses and the cover-up, the publicity, the large amounts of money, all these will inspire attorneys and survivors and families in a variety of ways to do this more often.

Higgins, D. J. (2001). A case study of child sexual abuse within a church community. *Journal of Religion & Abuse*, 3(1-2), 5–19. DOI:10.1300/J154v03n01\_02

A case study is presented of child sexual assault within a church community. How does a church community deal with the accusation of an adolescent female that—as a 13-year-old—she was sexually victimised and assaulted by her then 18-year-old boyfriend, five years her senior? Practical and pastoral issues, as well as ethical and legal concerns are addressed. Consideration is also given to the theological context of the church environments in which the situations arise. The implications for victims, perpetrators, leaders, and the church community of our actions—and failure to take appropriate action—are described, along with recommendations for prevention, and best practice in dealing with the sexual abuse of minors within church communities.

Gerdes, K. E., Beck, M. N., Cowan-Hancock, S., & Wilkinson-Sparks, T. (1996). Adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse: The case of Mormon women. *Affilia*, 11(1), 39–60. DOI:10.1177/088610999601100104

Adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse who are members of patriarchal religions face a particular challenge because church teaching and interactions with church members

may present barriers to the full recognition and healing of their abuse. This article reports on a study of the experiences of 71 Mormon women survivors of abuse in their dealings with church leaders and the women's responses to these interactions.