

**Final report:**  
**The role of organisational culture  
in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts**

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The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commissioned and funded this research project. It was carried out by Donald Palmer in collaboration with Valerie Feldman and Gemma McKibbin.

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**Royal Commission**  
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## Preface

On Friday 11 January 2013, the Governor-General appointed a six-member Royal Commission to inquire into how institutions with a responsibility for children have managed and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse.

The Royal Commission is tasked with investigating where systems have failed to protect children, and making recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions.

The Royal Commission has developed a comprehensive research program to support its work and to inform its findings and recommendations. The program focuses on eight themes:

1. Why does child sexual abuse occur in institutions?
2. How can child sexual abuse in institutions be prevented?
3. How can child sexual abuse be better identified?
4. How should institutions respond where child sexual abuse has occurred?
5. How should government and statutory authorities respond?
6. What are the treatment and support needs of victim/survivors and their families?
7. What is the history of particular institutions of interest?
8. How do we ensure the Royal Commission has a positive impact?

This research report falls within theme 1.

The research program means the Royal Commission can:

- obtain relevant background information
- fill key evidence gaps
- explore what is known and what works
- develop recommendations that are informed by evidence, can be implemented and respond to contemporary issues.

For more on this program, please visit [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/research](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/research)

## Table of Contents

Executive summary .....	6
Scope of the analysis.....	6
Definitions employed in the analysis .....	6
Methodology of the analysis.....	6
Results of the analysis.....	7
Policy implications of the analysis .....	10
1. Introduction .....	12
2. Basic concepts, methodology and theoretical approach.....	14
2.1 Basic concepts.....	14
2.2 Methodology.....	16
2.3 Prior theory and research on the role that culture plays in wrongdoing in and by organisations.....	21
3. Background issues.....	24
3.1 Background issues around perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in institutional contexts.....	24
3.2 Background issues relating to culture.....	31
4. The cultures of total institutions and their implications for child sexual abuse in institutional contexts.....	36
4.1 Total institutions constitute alternative moral universes.....	38
4.2 Total institutions employ theories of human transformation and embrace assumptions about human nature.....	40
4.3 Total institutions extinguish their members' previous identities.....	43
4.4 Total institutions promote secrecy .....	45
4.5 Total institutions exhibit unique power structures .....	46
4.6 Total institutions exhibit unique informal group dynamics.....	49
5. Other types of organisational culture and their implications for child sexual abuse in institutional contexts .....	51
5.1 The culture of institutionalised organisations .....	51
5.2 Macho cultures .....	53
5.3 Cultures that support child sexual abuse, grooming behaviours and sexually abusive behaviour by young people .....	56
5.4 Cultures that do not support the discussion of matters relating to sex.....	60
5.5 Cultural attitudes towards childhood and children .....	61

5.6	The culture of senior management .....	63
5.7	Power structures.....	64
5.8	Culture and informal group dynamics .....	73
5.9	Cultural orientations towards rule following.....	75
6.	Policy implications of our analysis of the role of organisational culture in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts .....	81
6.1	Culture considered broadly.....	81
6.2	Culture as it relates to child safe organisations.....	85
6.3	Culture as it relates to high-reliability systems.....	90
7.	Conclusion.....	95
8.	References .....	98

## **Executive summary**

### **Scope of the analysis**

This report analyses the role that organisational culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. It specifically considers how organisational culture can affect the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and the responses to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. The report also develops suggestions for addressing child sexual abuse in institutional contexts that are based on its analysis. These suggestions are geared towards reducing the incidence of child sexual abuse, detecting abuse earlier and improving the responses to abuse in institutional contexts.

### **Definitions employed in the analysis**

The report uses definitions of child sexual abuse and institutional contexts stipulated by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that are broad in scope and largely consistent with definitions found in the literature. Child sexual abuse is defined as ‘any act that exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted standards’ as well as ‘actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child’s inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity’. Institutional contexts are defined as ‘any public or private body, agency, association, club, institution or other entity or group of entities of any kind’ that provides services to children.

The report uses a conception of organisational culture specified by the Royal Commission that is based on Palmer (2012). This conception understands culture to consist of content and form. Cultural content includes assumptions (most importantly, presumptions of fact regarding people’s attitudes and behaviours), values and beliefs (most importantly, understandings regarding the virtue of alternative ways to think and act) and norms (expectations regarding how people should think and behave). Forms include artefacts and practices that symbolically convey cultural content.

### **Methodology of the analysis**

The report’s analysis is based on two bodies of theory and research. It builds on a systematic search of literature on the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, which included 41 articles and books. It also builds on the author’s knowledge of the role that culture plays in misconduct in and by organisations more generally, which is examined in his published and forthcoming works (Greve, Palmer & Pozner, 2010; Palmer, 2012; Palmer, 2013; Palmer & Feldman, 2013; Palmer, Smith-Crow & Greenwood, 2016; Palmer & Moore, 2016; Palmer forthcoming).

The report's analysis references seven case studies provided by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

- 1 *Report of Case Study No. 2: YMCA NSW's response to the conduct of Jonathan Lord.*
- 2 *Report of Case Study No. 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay.*
- 3 *Report of Case Study No. 9: The responses of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide, and the South Australian Police, to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Ann's Special School.*
- 4 *Report of Case Study No. 14: The response of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong to allegations of child sexual abuse, and related criminal proceedings, against John Gerard Nestor, a priest of the Diocese.*
- 5 *Report of Case Study No. 15: Response of swimming institutions, the Queensland and NSW Offices of the DPP and the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian to allegations of child sexual abuse by swimming coaches.*
- 6 *Report of Case Study No. 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse.*
- 7 *Transcripts from Case Study No. 32: Geelong Grammar School.*

Also referenced are a variety of newspaper articles, news magazine stories and books identified by the author that relate to instances of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts in the United States and other jurisdictions around the globe.

## **Results of the analysis**

### ***Background issues***

The report begins with a discussion of background issues relating to the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and the response to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. These issues must be taken into account to develop a comprehensive understanding of the role culture plays in child sexual abuse in these contexts. Most importantly, the report briefly outlines three alternative sequences through which perpetrators can sexually abuse children. Perpetrators can sexually abuse children with or without first engaging in extensive social interaction with their victims – or rational and strategic grooming – that lays a foundation for the abuse. Perpetrators can also sexually abuse children after engaging in extensive prior social interaction with their victims that lays the foundation for the abuse. This occurs in a crecive process; that is, it is less than fully rational and strategic, being more gradual and spontaneous, and involving increasingly significant boundary violations. This section of the report also briefly identifies organisational structures and processes endemic to institutions of all kinds that can slow the detection of and impede responses to child sexual abuse.

### ***Societal culture***

The report then describes how cultural currents at the societal level might influence the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it. It elaborates on how these societal influences can provide a backdrop against which organisational culture enables and deals with child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. It focuses on cultural currents around the definition of child sexual abuse as a 'social problem', as well as those relating to the nature of childhood, gender, race and sexual orientation. Most importantly, this section of the report acknowledges that the degree to which child sexual abuse is considered a social problem varies over time and across geopolitical jurisdictions. It also acknowledges that in developed societies such as Australia, victims of child sexual abuse often find it difficult to disclose their abuse. This is because generally children are given fewer opportunities than adults to speak and their representations are given lesser credence. Finally, it acknowledges that women and people from demographic minorities, such as members of non-white and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities, often find it difficult to disclose child sexual abuse they experience or witness. This is because their representations are given less credence than those of members of demographic majorities, such as heterosexuals, men and people from Anglo cultural backgrounds.

### ***Organisational cultures***

The report then presents its analysis of the role organisational culture can play in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, which is divided into two parts. The first part explores the role culture can play in child sexual abuse in a unique institutional context that conforms to the 'total institution' ideal type. In this type of institution, members are sharply delineated into staff members and 'inmates'. Staff members comprehensively control most facets of inmates' lives, which are largely restricted to a demarcated physical space. Three of the seven case studies provided by the Royal Commission focus on institutions that conform closely to the total institution ideal type. These case studies examined the Parramatta Training School for Girls and its maximum security annex, the Institution for Girls in Hay; three Victorian state-run youth training and reception centres: Turana, Winlaton and Baltara; and Geelong Grammar School. Two other case studies focus on organisations that exhibit several elements of the total institution ideal type: the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong.

The report identifies six features of organisations that provide services to children and young people that conform to the total institution ideal type. These features make the organisations conducive to the perpetration of child abuse and resistant to the speedy detection of abuse and effective responses to abuse when it occurs. Four of these features are particularly important.



First, the report discusses the tendency of total institutions to constitute alternative moral universes for their staff and inmates. In organisations that cater to children and young people, this tendency can insulate perpetrators of sexual abuse, their victims and third-party observers of abuse from structures in civil society that might otherwise inhibit the abuse, speed up its detection and enhance responses to it.

Second, the report discusses the tendency of total institutions to embrace degrading assumptions about the fundamental nature of inmates and to follow harsh theories about how inmates can best be rehabilitated. This tendency can endorse the psychological, physical and sexual abuse of children.

Third, the tendency of total institutions to extinguish the pre-institutional identities of their inmates is discussed. This tendency can empower and motivate staff to abuse the children in their care, disempower children from resisting abuse, and disempower children who are abused and third parties who are aware of the abuse from disclosing it.

Fourth, the report discusses the tendency of total institutions to withhold information about the institution's operations from inmates, staff and external constituencies. This tendency can inhibit the ability of victims of child sexual abuse and third parties to respond effectively.

The second part of the analysis explores the role organisational culture can play in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, whether or not these contexts conform to the total institution ideal type. The report identifies nine types of organisational culture that can support the perpetration of child sexual abuse, slow the detection of abuse and/or impede effective responses to abuse.

First, the cultures of organisations that are viewed by their members as ends in themselves, independent of the goals they were established to pursue, are discussed. In organisations that provide services to children and young people, these cultures can impede the disclosure of, and undermine responses to, child sexual abuse because they prioritise the reputation of the organisation over the welfare of the victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Second, organisational cultures that reinforce hyper-masculine assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms regarding men and boys (referred to as 'macho cultures') are discussed. In organisations that provide services to children and young people, these cultures can facilitate the perpetration of child sexual abuse and slow the detection and impede the response to abuse when it occurs. This is because they authorise perpetrators to engage in sexually abusive behaviours and encourage victims to tolerate the abuse perpetrated against them.

Third, the report discusses the cultures that support child sexual abuse, grooming behaviours and sexualised behaviours more generally. These cultures can facilitate child sexual abuse by authorising perpetrators to engage in behaviours that either constitute sexual abuse or lead to abuse. They can also impede the detection of abuse by making it difficult for victims and third parties to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate social interaction *between* adults and children and young people, and *among* children and young people.

Fourth, organisational cultures that do not support the open discussion of matters relating to sex and child sexual abuse are discussed. These cultures can facilitate child sexual abuse by making it difficult for victims to recognise perpetrators' grooming behaviours. They can also make it hard for perpetrators and their victims to understand the consequences of increasingly significant boundary violations. It can also be difficult for victims and third parties to reveal abuse because these cultures inhibit victims and third parties from developing the vocabulary needed for disclosure.

Fifth, cultures that inhibit and undermine children's self-expression are discussed. These cultures can make it difficult for children to disclose the abuse they experience or are aware of, and make it less likely that children will be considered credible when they disclose abuse.

Sixth, the report discusses the cultures in which senior managers, especially those who are professionally trained, work. In organisations that provide services to children and young people, these cultures can undermine responses to child sexual abuse by prioritising the organisation's defence against external sanctions (such as bad publicity or legal judgments) over the welfare of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Finally, the report discusses three cultural currents that can indirectly support the perpetration of child sexual abuse, slow the detection of abuse and/or impede effective responses to abuse. One intensifies the effects that the power carers typically wield over children can have on the perpetration, detection, and response to abuse in institutional contexts. Another shapes the informal group dynamics linked to perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it. The last undermines compliance with policies and procedures designed to inhibit child sexual abuse, speed up its detection and enhance responses in institutional contexts.

### **Policy implications of the analysis**

This report also draws on the analysis summarised above to suggest three ways to reduce the incidence, speed up the detection and enhance the response to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts.

First, it suggests that stakeholders of institutions that provide services to children and young people pledge to introduce a culture in their organisations that is the opposite of one that

(as the report indicates) facilitates child sexual abuse. Further, it offers suggestions on how to introduce such cultures; by encouraging leaders to behave in ways that convey the suggested culture; by training staff members to embrace such a culture; and by engineering cultural artefacts and practices that symbolise this culture.

Second, the report suggests that stakeholders of organisations that provide services to children and young people could draw on insights from the literature on 'safety cultures' more generally to enhance the literature on 'child safe cultures'. Current literature focuses on developing written high-level policies and procedures and articulating the underlying assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms that support them. This is good in theory, but it underestimates the difficulty of translating such high-level policies and procedures into work routines that can be implemented effectively and efficiently in specific organisational contexts. The current literature on child safe organisations focuses on leader behaviour and staff member training as mechanisms for implementing child safe cultures. This too is good in theory, but it fails to take into account the benefits of encouraging staff members, children and young people to embrace a child safe culture, and designing artefacts and introducing practices that support such a culture. The literature on safety cultures more generally draws attention to the importance of going beyond high-level policies and procedures. It emphasises using symbolic means to convey cultural content that supports a safety focus.

Third, the report suggests that stakeholders of organisations that provide services to children and young people could draw on insights on 'high reliability systems' to enhance current literature on child safe cultures. The literature on high reliability systems examines the characteristics of complex, tightly coupled systems that have a robust response to rare but severely adverse events. The report proposes that many organisations can be considered complex and tightly coupled systems and that detected instances of child sexual abuse can be likened to rare but severely adverse events. Thus, the report suggests that some of the recommendations from the literature might be effective for organisations working with children and young people. The report's recommendations include extensive involvement of lower-level staff members in formulating organisational routines that inhibit the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it. It also recommends persistent scrutiny of instances in which risks relating to child sexual abuse emerge in the organisation, with the goal of continuous process improvement for inhibiting, detecting and responding to child sexual abuse.

## 1. Introduction

This report explores the role that organisational culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts and offers suggestions for addressing abuse in these contexts when it occurs.

Child sexual abuse is a social problem; it is a pattern of behaviour that is prevalent, harmful and morally repugnant, and it needs to be addressed. Global meta-analyses estimate that 20 per cent of girls and 8 per cent of boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 (Pereda et al., 2009; Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). Further, Australian studies estimate that up to 26 per cent of girls and 16 per cent of boys experience child sexual abuse at some point in their childhood (Price-Robertson et al., 2010). Scholars working in the field of child sexual abuse have demonstrated a strong link between child sexual abuse and a range of short- and long-term negative consequences (Lindert et al., 2013; Paolucci et al., 2001). Victims are more likely to experience poor mental health, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Paolucci et al., 2001), and are more likely to attempt and commit suicide (Cashmore & Shackel, 2013). They also report problems developing secure, healthy attachments with others (Whiffen & MacIntosh, 2005) and are more likely to abuse alcohol (Cutajar et al., 2010), be convicted of a criminal offence and be the victim of crime (Ogloff et al., 2012).

It is important to understand the factors that influence child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. While the vast majority of child sexual abuse victims are abused in the home or community by a relative, family friend, neighbour or acquaintance (Conte, Wolf & Smith, 1989; Stoltenborgh et al., 2011; Richards, 2011), a significant number are abused in institutional contexts (Trocmé & Schumaker, 1999). There are no comprehensive large-scale studies on the frequency of child sexual abuse across the full range of organisations delivering services to children and young people (Wurtele, 2012; Lanning & Dietz, 2014). However, the authors of one study found that 10.3 per cent of young people living in youth justice centres reported being sexually abused by a staff member during their incarceration (Beck et al., 2010). Another study found that 9.6 per cent of public school students in the United States reported being sexually abused by an educator during their student careers (Shakeshaft, 2004). Some evidence suggests that children are at greater risk of being sexually abused in an institutional context than in a non-institutional context (Euser et al., 2013; Trocmé & Schumaker, 1999; Schumacher & Carlson, 1999). Finally, some evidence also suggests that child sexual abuse that occurs in institutions may be more likely to involve multiple perpetrators (Schumacher & Carlson, 1999) who abuse multiple victims (Richards, 2011). In addition, Smith and Freyd (2014) suggest that for victims of institutional child sexual abuse, the traumatic consequences are often exacerbated by the publicity that frequently surrounds the abuse and inadequate institutional responses to the abuse.

In addition, there is a moral imperative to understand the factors that influence child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. Many institutional contexts in which child sexual abuse occurs are expressly established to enhance the physical, intellectual or moral development of children (such as sports clubs, schools and churches) and are at the very least expected to safeguard their wellbeing. Thus, it is incumbent on the leaders and staff of such institutions to prevent child sexual abuse and respond appropriately when it does occur.

It is very important to understand the role that organisational culture plays in the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it. Many scholars whose work is reviewed in this report believe that the cultures of organisations delivering services to children and young people influence perpetration, detection and responses. But the work of these scholars is somewhat preliminary and largely unintegrated.<sup>1</sup>

This report makes three contributions to the literature on child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. First, it analyses how organisational culture can affect the way that child sexual abuse is perpetrated, detected and responded to in institutional contexts. The analysis is grounded in evidence about the role that culture plays in institutional child sexual abuse, gathered through a systematic review of the literature. In addition, the author has critically reviewed the theory and research into the role of organisational culture in misconduct more generally (Greve, Palmer & Pozner, 2010; Palmer & Maher, 2010; Palmer, 2012, 2013; Palmer & Feldman, 2013; Palmer & Yenkey, 2015; Palmer, Smith-Crowe & Greenwood, 2016; Palmer & Moore, 2016; Palmer, forthcoming).

Second, the report illustrates its analysis of the role organisational culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts by drawing on seven Royal Commission case studies and books and news reports about child sexual abuse in institutions in Australia, the United States and other jurisdictions.

Finally, the report develops the policy implications of its analysis. It suggests how organisational cultures might be changed to reduce perpetration, speed up detection and enhance responses to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> Many other organisational structures and processes are also known to influence misconduct in and by organisations, making them sensible candidates for consideration in connection with child sexual abuse in institutions. For example, researchers have begun exploring the role of organisational participant emotions in organisational misconduct (see Smith-Crowe & Warren, 2014). Perhaps the emerging literature on emotions and other organisational structures and processes can be tapped in subsequent reports to enhance our understanding of child sexual abuse in institutions.

## **2. Basic concepts, methodology and theoretical approach**

### **2.1 Basic concepts**

#### **2.1.1 Child sexual abuse**

Child sexual abuse is defined by the Royal Commission (2015: 13) as:

*... any act that exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography (Bromfield, 2005). It includes child grooming which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.*

Child sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adults against children and it can be carried out by children and young people against other children and young people (Quadara et al., 2015). Child sexual abuse carried out by children and young people is referred to as *sexually abusive behaviour* (Pratt & Miller, 2012; McKibbin, Humphreys & Hamilton, 2015).

#### **2.1.2 Institutional contexts**

Institutional contexts are defined by the Royal Commission (2015: 13) as:

*... any public or private body, agency, association, club, institution or other entity or group of entities of any kind (whether incorporated or unincorporated) and however described and includes for example an entity or group or entities (including an entity or groups of entities that no longer exists) that provides or has at any time provided, activities, facilities, programs or services of any kind that provide the means through which adults have contact with children including through their families and does not include the family.*

When analysing the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, it is important to distinguish between different types of institutional contexts in which children play, work and reside, which we will refer to as 'organisations that provide services to children and young people'. Different types of organisations may exhibit different cultural influences on the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it.

### 2.1.3 Organisational culture

Organisational culture is conceptualised by the Royal Commission (2015: 10) as being the assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms that distinguish appropriate from inappropriate organisational participant attitudes and behaviours (for example, teacher and student attitudes and behaviour in a boarding school). In this conceptualisation, which follows Palmer (2012: 66–67), assumptions are shared understandings about the fundamental nature of an organisation’s internal or external environment (for example, whether the organisational environment is competitive or cooperative). Values and beliefs are shared understandings about what constitutes virtuous or unscrupulous attitudes or behaviours (for example, whether it is better to compete or cooperate with one’s peers). Norms are shared understandings about what one should or should not think or do (for example, whether one should or should not help co-workers or fellow students complete their assigned tasks).

Theory and research about organisational culture identifies three mechanisms for spreading culture throughout an organisation. Much theory and research focus on the role that leaders play in communicating the assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms they expect organisational participants to exhibit (Schein, 1985). Other theory and research focus on the process for selecting and socialising new employees into the culture advanced by organisational leaders (Schein, 1961). Finally, other theory and research points to the importance of artefacts and practices for conveying cultural content (Martin & Siehl, 1983). For example, open-plan office configurations (an artefact) convey the value and belief that revering distinctions in status is not virtuous; after-work socials (a practice) convey the norm that co-workers should develop friendships. We will draw on this literature when discussing the policy implications of our analysis of culture and institutional child sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The conceptualisation of organisational culture that guides this report captures key elements of multiple alternative conceptualisations seen in the academic literature. Giorgi, Lockwood and Glynn (2015) identify five alternative conceptualisations of culture: values, stories, frames, toolkits and logics. The conceptualisation that guides this report obviously incorporates key elements of the values perspective, as it highlights the importance of values and beliefs. It also incorporates elements of the stories perspective, as it highlights the importance of artefacts as conveyors of culture and recognises stories as one type of artefact. In addition, it incorporates key elements of the frames and logics perspectives, as it highlights the importance of assumptions about the nature of the world that provide the foundation for the cognitive frames and logics that guide action in a social system. However, it does not draw much from the toolkit perspective, which views culture as a collection of symbolic resources that can be drawn upon by actors of various kinds to legitimise their strategic action (Swidler, 1986). The failure to draw on the toolkit conceptualisation of culture does not compromise this report as the toolkit approach has relatively little use for understanding the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutions.

Theory and research on organisational culture recognises that culture can influence the structure of power, the nature of informal group dynamics and participants' compliance with administrative systems (for example, the division of labour and policies and procedures) in organisations. Further, it is well accepted that power structures, informal group dynamics and administrative systems also shape attitudes and behaviours. Thus, an organisation's culture can influence attitudes and behaviour indirectly, through its effect on power alignments, informal group dynamics and administrative systems. Hence, the report also considers the impact of organisational culture on child sexual abuse in institutional contexts as it may operate through its effect on power alignments, informal group dynamics and administrative systems.

## **2.2 Methodology**

### **2.2.1 Literature search for theory and research on the role of culture in institutional child sexual abuse**

Prior theory and research on the role of culture in child sexual abuse perpetrated in institutional contexts was identified as follows. Six major searches of the literature were carried out in social science literature databases, including Social Sciences Citation Index, Sociological Abstracts, PsycINFO and Social Services Abstracts.<sup>3</sup> Each of the major searches used different combinations of search terms. Quotation marks were used in all searches to demarcate the phrase 'child sexual abuse'; this ensured that citations contained these terms in consecutive order. Asterisks were used to truncate terms with multiple endings, expanding the searches. For example, searching for the term 'institution\*' retrieved citations that included the terms 'institution', 'institutions', 'institutional' and 'institutionalise'. No additional filters were used in database searches, which meant that diverse document types were identified on academic databases, including journal articles, books, reviews, dissertations and government documents. The six database searches were supplemented with additional sources found through reference lists of key documents, special issues of journals focusing on institutional child sexual abuse (most of which related to the Catholic Church) and book chapters that led us to useful edited volumes.

The first major search combined the search terms 'child sexual abuse' and 'review', producing 1,822 unique returns. The second search combined the terms 'child sexual abuse', 'institution\*' and 'culture\*', producing 75 unique returns. The third search combined the terms 'child sexual abuse' and 'institution\*', producing 254 unique returns. The fourth

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<sup>3</sup> Web of Science Core Collection, Annual Review of Sociology, Annual Review of Law and Social Sciences, Social Science Research Network/Economics Research Network and the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research databases were also searched to ensure a comprehensive literature review.



search combined the terms 'child sexual abuse' and 'organization\*', producing 110 unique returns. The fifth search allowed for the alternate spelling of 'organization', combining the terms 'child sexual abuse' and 'organisation\*', producing 15 unique returns. The sixth search combined the terms 'child sexual abuse' and 'school', producing 2,174 unique returns. In total, our searches produced 4,450 unique citations related to child sexual abuse. Although we used the 'Find Duplicates' function of EndNote to remove redundant citations after each round of searches, additional duplicates were found manually (they were not identified by EndNote because of unique punctuation, misspelled words or the use of authors' first names versus initials), resulting in 4,442 unique citations. Of this total, approximately 50 citations were not in English and were not reviewed for relevance.<sup>4</sup>

The vast majority of literature on child sexual abuse appears to focus on abuse occurring in non-institutional contexts. The bulk of this research appears to address the psychological and physical effects of child sexual abuse on victims; the efficacy of treatment, prevention and intervention programs and systems; risk and protective factors relating to child sexual abuse; the role of memory; and the usefulness of different models for substantiating child sexual abuse. The most common topics found during the literature review were:

- young people who sexually abuse other children or young people
- the effect of child sexual abuse on, and resilience of, victims
- the effect of treatment for perpetrators of child sexual abuse
- the evaluation of programs to prevent child sexual abuse
- the risk and protective factors for child sexual abuse victimisation
- the characteristics of, and treatment for, perpetrators of child sexual abuse
- the prosecution of cases of child sexual abuse
- the role of memory, and validity of child reporting, in child sexual abuse cases
- the needs of victims
- high-profile child sexual abuse cases
- paedophilia and child sexual abuse
- the prevalence and incidence of child sexual abuse
- child sexual abuse perpetrated by women, and boy victims of child sexual abuse
- the impacts of child sexual abuse on the sexual relationships of adult victims/survivors
- cross-cultural understandings of child sexual abuse
- the links between past victimisation and perpetration

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<sup>4</sup> We also conducted exploratory supplemental searches of the literature using the phrase 'child sexual abuse' in combination with terms relating to specific institutional or organisational contexts such as 'nursery', 'day care', 'child care', 'foster care', 'after school' and 'residential'. These exploratory searches were not fruitful enough to pursue in a more systematic search.

- ritual or organised child sexual abuse
- media coverage of child sexual abuse
- school-based responses to child sexual abuse and prevention initiatives.

Ultimately, a perusal of titles and abstracts revealed that 105 of 4,442 downloaded citations appeared to be relevant to the role that culture plays in institutional child sexual abuse. A considerable number of these citations (N=28) referenced work that focused exclusively on the role culture played in child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. One of these citations referenced what is widely believed to be one of the most comprehensive and authoritative books on the role that culture played in child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, Marie Keenan's *Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church: Gender, Power, and Organizational Culture* (2012). Keenan was read closely instead of reading the other 27 works, which were largely subsumed by it.

Another smaller subset of articles related exclusively to the formulation and implementation of policies geared to creating child safe cultures in organisations (N=6). Two of these articles were read closely (Kenny & Wurtele, 2012; Tucci et al., 2015), but the other four were only skimmed because it was judged that the conceptualisation of 'culture' used by these policy-related articles was so broad as to make them largely irrelevant to the task at hand. Specifically, these articles' conceptualisation of culture encompassed almost all structural aspects of organisations and did not correspond with the Royal Commission's conception of culture, which focused more narrowly on assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms.

Each of the remaining 71 articles was read closely. Of these, approximately half (N=36) provided no useful insights into the role of culture in institutional child sexual abuse. However, a few contained information on sexual abuse in institutional contexts that was useful and these are discussed and cited in the report. For example, Simon's (1995) discussion of the etiology of unethical therapist–patient sexual relationships is used and referenced in connection with the analysis in section 3.1.1 of the sometimes crevice character of child sexual abuse; that is, it is less than fully rational and strategic, being more gradual and spontaneous, and involving increasingly significant boundary violations.

The other half provided at least some insight into the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse perpetrated in institutional contexts (N=35). Further, a subset of these articles referenced other works on the role of culture in institutional child sexual abuse that were not discovered during the literature search (N=5). These articles were also obtained and read. For example, Timmerman and Schreuder's (2014) review of research on the sexual abuse of children and young people in residential care was identified in the course of the literature search. Their review referenced Coates' (1997) article on the role of charismatic leadership in institutional child sexual abuse, which was obtained and read. Thus, a total of

41 works, including Keenan (2012), were considered to address the role of culture in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts.

It is important to note, though, that many of the works that provided insight into the role of culture in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts did so only tangentially. For example, Sullivan and Beech (2002) only explicitly mention the subject of culture once in their article, writing, 'Agencies and organizations who [sic] work with children are increasingly becoming aware of the need to create cultures of safety' (154). But the authors do not discuss the nature of 'cultures of safety'. However, they do implicitly touch on the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts when they mention that the closed and self-protective nature of many organisations inhibits the detection of child sexual abuse and undermines responses to it. We develop this theme in some depth in our analysis in sections 4.4 and 5.1. Similarly, Kelly et al. (1993) do not explicitly mention culture in their article. However, the authors do discuss ritualistic child sexual abuse, which while disputed, implicitly addresses the role that culture can play in the perpetration of child sexual abuse. This is discussed in footnote 16 in section 5.3.1.

## **2.2.2 Supplementation of the literature search with prior theory and research on the role of culture in organisational misconduct**

Due to the dearth of prior work on the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, the author used his knowledge of theory and research on the role of culture in organisational misconduct more generally to round out analysis of its role in institutional child sexual abuse. The author's understanding of the theory and research is reflected in his prior critical reviews (Greve, Palmer & Pozner, 2010; Palmer, 2012; Palmer, 2013; Palmer & Feldman, 2013; Palmer, Smith-Crow & Greenwood, 2016; Palmer & Moore, 2016; Palmer, forthcoming) and empirical research on specific forms and instances of organisational misconduct (Palmer & Maher, 2010; Palmer & Yenkey, 2015).

Thus, this report should be considered a 'critical analysis' of the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse perpetrated in institutional contexts. That is, the report provides an analysis that builds on the relatively small amount of theory and research into the role of culture in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. It also draws on insights found in the more extensive literature on the role that culture plays in organisational misconduct more generally. The author's understanding of theory and research on the role of culture in organisational wrongdoing is reviewed briefly in section 2.3. This understanding is built to a significant extent on the work of three scholars who are cited extensively in the report: Goffman's analysis of total institutions (Goffman, 1963), Zimbardo's analysis of prisons (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, 2010) and Vaughan's analysis of organisational deviance (Vaughan, 1996).

### 2.2.3 Illustration of theoretical analysis

A variety of sources on known instances of child sexual abuse in institutions were used to illustrate the role of culture in the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in institutional contexts. Most important, seven case studies provided by the Royal Commission were analysed:

- 1 *Report of Case Study No. 2: YMCA NSW's response to the conduct of Jonathan Lord.*
- 2 *Report of Case Study No. 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay.*
- 3 *Report of Case Study No. 9: The responses of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide, and the South Australian Police, to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Ann's Special School.*
- 4 *Report of Case Study No. 14: The response of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong to allegations of child sexual abuse, and related criminal proceedings, against John Gerard Nestor, a priest of the Diocese.*
- 5 *Report of Case Study No. 15: Response of swimming institutions, the Queensland and NSW Offices of the DPP and the Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian to allegations of child sexual abuse by swimming coaches.*
- 6 *Report of Case Study No. 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse.*
- 7 *Transcripts from Case Study No. 32: Geelong Grammar School.*

Further, case materials and news reports on a number of other instances of institutional child sexual abuse investigated by the Royal Commission, including abuse committed by staff members at the Retta Dixon Home, Knox Grammar School and the Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services outside school hours care (OSHC) facility were scrutinised. Finally, news reports on several instances of child sexual abuse in the United States were explored. These related to abuse at Pennsylvania State University; private grammar schools (St. George's School in Rhode Island and Horace Mann School in New York); public grammar schools (in the Miramonte school district in California and Prince George's school district in Maryland); and the police department in Oakland, California.

## **2.3 Prior theory and research on the role that culture plays in wrongdoing in and by organisations**

### **2.3.1 Prior theory**

Theory on the role that culture plays in wrongdoing in and by organisations mainly focuses on how culture facilitates the initiation and persistence of misconduct in organisations. Culture can facilitate misconduct in two ways (Palmer, 2012). First, organisational cultures can endorse assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms that cast wrongdoing in a positive light; that is, conceptualise it as rightful. Organisational cultures can explicitly endorse wrongdoing as rightful. For example, the cultures of some sales organisations contain the assumption that the competitive nature of the sales profession requires employees to present a biased version of the truth to potential customers, and perhaps the belief that it is good to do so. Organisational cultures can also implicitly endorse wrongdoing as rightful, by endorsing behavioural orientations that are conducive to wrongdoing. For example, the cultures of some political organisations may encourage the assumption that sometimes a person must sacrifice their principles to attain their goals. There may also be a culture that the ends justify the means, an orientation that might lead a political operative to view dirty tricks on behalf of a superior as acceptable.

Second, organisational cultures can endorse techniques of neutralisation that specify extenuating circumstances in which wrongdoing can be considered acceptable. Sykes and Matza (1957) were the first to describe how culturally endorsed techniques of neutralisation can facilitate misconduct. Their study of youth gangs found that the values and norms of groups of young people who were engaged in criminal behaviour weren't any different to those of law-abiding citizens. Rather, the young people embraced an elaborate set of understandings about when non-normative values could rightfully be pursued. Ashforth and Anand (2003) drew on Sykes and Matza's study to identify six techniques of neutralisation that facilitate misconduct in organisations: denial of victim; denial of harm; denial of responsibility; social weighting; balancing the ledger; and appeal to higher loyalty.<sup>5</sup>

When an organisational culture features the denial of responsibility technique of neutralisation, it conveys the assumption that participants have no alternative but to engage in a wrongful behaviour (this outlook is common in hierarchically organised institutions, where subordinates believe they have no choice but to follow the orders of

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<sup>5</sup> While Ashforth and Anand (2003) draw on the work of Sykes and Matza (1957), their understanding of techniques of neutralisation differs slightly from that of Sykes and Matza. Ashforth and Anand understand techniques of neutralisation to be justifications for wrongdoing used in the moment or after the fact. Sykes and Matza consider techniques of neutralisation to be stable elements of a group's culture that provide the foundation for misconduct.

superiors). When a culture features the denial of harm technique, it conveys the assumption that the wronged persons are not actually injured by the wrongdoing. The denial of victim technique conveys the assumption that some classes of individuals (for example, racial minorities) are not *really* victims, but instead deserve the harm done to them. The appeal to higher loyalty technique conveys the belief that a group to which a person belongs for example, fellow teachers) have higher moral standing than others (for example, students), and so their interests take precedence over the interests of others. In the balancing the ledger technique, participants believe their good deeds compensate for their wrongdoing. There are two variants of the social weighting technique. In the first variant, participants believe that their wrongdoing is no worse than the misconduct of participants of other organisations. In the second variant, participants believe that people outside the organisation lack the moral standing to make informed or accurate judgments about the 'wrongfulness' of the behaviour.

### **2.3.2 Prior research**

The relationship between culture and misconduct has been analysed at multiple levels, most importantly at the societal, organisational and small-group levels. At the societal level, qualitative case study research has examined how a country's culture can facilitate government corruption (Scott, 1972). For example, Granovetter (2007) maintains that when a country's legitimate economic structures do not allow for the efficient exchange of valued resources, cultures arise to endorse illegitimate structures such as black markets that enhance exchange. In addition, quantitative empirical research has examined how cross-national variation in cultural endorsement or situational tolerance of misconduct can explain variation in the level of specific types of illegitimate behaviour. For example, Fisman and Miguel (2007) studied the extent to which embassy personnel based in New York City accumulated and failed to pay parking tickets. They found that embassy personnel representing countries that Transparency International (TI) judged as tolerating corruption had more unpaid tickets than personnel from countries that didn't tolerate corruption. Similarly, Palmer and Yenkey (2015) studied the likelihood that professional cyclists who competed in the 2010 Tour de France used banned performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) in the months leading up to the race. They found the likelihood was directly linked to the tolerance of corruption in the athletes' own countries or the country where their team was based.

At the organisational level, qualitative case studies demonstrate that a corporation's culture can foster misconduct. For example, Sims and Brinkman (2003) contend that Enron Corporation's culture assumed that their employees were brilliant (demonstrated by the often-used phrase 'the smartest guys in the room') and valued cleverness, including ingenuity to circumvent rules. Similarly, Kulik (2005) maintains that Enron's culture honoured agency theory assumptions and beliefs, which prioritised the unbridled pursuit of

self-interest. The two teams of authors contend that these cultural elements fostered envelope-pushing behaviour at Enron that culminated in market manipulation and financial fraud. In addition, quantitative empirical research shows how variance in cultural content across organisations explains variance in the level of misconduct. For example, Palmer and Yenkey (2015) show that professional cyclists employed by teams based in France, and that mainly employed French cyclists, were less likely to use banned PEDs before the 2010 Tour de France. This is presumably because their teams embraced the strong anti-PED culture reflected in French media and public sentiment. Interestingly, these authors found that cyclists employed by teams that took a strong public stance against PED use (one of which was named The High Road) were not less likely to use such drugs before the race. This suggests that these teams only paid lip service to riding clean.

Finally, at the small-group level, qualitative case study research suggests that the culture of organisational sub-units can influence the propensity to engage in misconduct. For example, Geis (1995) demonstrated that techniques of neutralisation, such as the appeal to higher loyalties and social weighting pervasive in the sales units of several United States heavy electrical equipment companies in the 1950s, allowed sales executives to engage in illegal bid rigging at the expense of their municipal government customers. Similarly, several quantitative empirical studies provide evidence suggesting that variation in the cultures of sub-units within organisations drives variation in the level of misconduct across sub-units. For example, Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly (1998) show that variation in the degree to which workers' immediate co-workers engage in misconduct drives variation in their own misconduct. Similarly, Palmer and Yenkey (2015) demonstrate that the likelihood that professional cyclists used PEDs before the 2010 Tour de France was influenced by the likelihood that their most deviant teammate (the teammate whose blood profile was most suspicious statistically) used such drugs before the race.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> There is also a significant body of work on the impact of cultural milieu and cultural climate on ethical decision-making in organisations that is tangentially related to the role of organisational culture in misconduct in and by organisations. For an excellent review of the ethical decision-making literature that considers this work, see Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe (2008).

### **3. Background issues**

#### **3.1 Background issues around perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in institutional contexts**

The perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in institutional settings are shaped by multiple dynamics that must be taken into account to develop a comprehensive analysis of the role of culture. These features and dynamics are briefly described below.

##### **3.1.1 Background issues around the perpetration of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts**

Instances of child sexual abuse vary from each other in many ways, two of which are relevant to this report. First, instances of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts vary with respect to the degree to which they are preceded by the extensive social interaction between perpetrator and victim that lays the foundation for the abuse. At one end of the spectrum, abuse occurs in a discrete moment without much prior social interaction. At the other end of the spectrum, sexual abuse unfolds over time through escalating social interaction. It begins with behaviours that might be considered non-sexual and appropriate, culminating in behaviours that have obvious sexual implications and that are clearly inappropriate (Faller 1988).

Second, child sexual abuse that unfolds over time varies in the extent to which perpetrators' behaviour can be considered fully rational and strategic. At one end of the spectrum, perpetrators self-consciously orchestrate the unfolding process that culminates in abuse. There is extensive theory and research on how adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts gain access to victims, groom them and prevent those victims from disclosing the abuse (Ackerman, 2008; Colton et al., 2010; Moulden et al., 2010; Quadara et al., 2015). In a European qualitative study of eight men who sexually abused children in an institutional context Colton and colleagues (2010) found that the perpetrators deliberately sought employment in organisations providing services to children and young people to gain access to potential victims. The authors also found that the perpetrators modified their work environments to create opportunities to be alone with victims so as to carry out the abuse undetected (Colton et al., 2010). This is consistent with the results of a narrative review carried out by Wurtele (2012), which found that a significant proportion of perpetrators in institutional contexts purposefully join organisations as volunteers or employees to create opportunities to sexually abuse children and young people.

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts often groom victims in a way that demonstrates significant planning (Moulden et al., 2010). Grooming can involve the



perpetrator giving the victim special attention; organisational privileges, such as extended unscheduled free time; or valued gifts such as drugs and alcohol. Grooming can also involve the perpetrator engaging in escalating physical contact with the victim. The perpetrator may pat the victim on the back and play tickling games in the early part of the grooming process. The perpetrator can use this seemingly non-sexual touching to gauge how a victim might react to more overtly sexual touching. As grooming continues, the perpetrator may massage the victim and then begin to touch the victim in explicitly sexual ways. Often this process of desensitising victims to touch is associated with the emotional exploitation of victims. That is, many perpetrators of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts try to get victims to become emotionally dependent on them in an effort to facilitate the sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1984; Conte, Wolfe & Smith, 1989; Gallagher, 2000; Smallbone, 2008).

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts also groom the caregivers of victims, as well as their own colleagues (Colton et al., 2010). This grooming of caregivers and colleagues is carried out in an effort to prevent victims from disclosing the sexual abuse (Leclerc, Beauregard & Proulx, 2008; McAlinden, 2006). Perpetrators exploit the power and authority associated with their role in an organisation to create the impression that they are beyond reproach, as well as to exert pressure on victims to keep them from disclosing sexual abuse. Colten and colleagues (2010) found that perpetrators used tactics such as driving wedges between victims and their mothers, as well as befriending victims' families to gain their trust and orchestrate opportunities to be alone with victims. In addition, some perpetrators use emotional blackmail and coercion to keep the child sexual abuse hidden, rather than using physical force against victims. Perpetrators may also pathologise victims so that they would not be believed if disclosure did occur (Moulden et al., 2010).<sup>7</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, some perpetrators proceed in a less than fully premeditated, crevice fashion. In such cases, the child sexual abuse is likely to unfold in ways similar to that of other types of inappropriate sexual relationships, such as between therapists and clients, in which the perpetrator progresses down what Simon (1995) describes as a 'slippery slope of boundary violations'. The concept of a 'slippery slope' refers to a multi-dimensional process in which individuals engage in behaviours that they

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<sup>7</sup> A related issue relates to perpetrators' use of their affiliations with legitimate formal organisations to gain the trust of victims and their guardians. People view legitimate formal organisations as having rational processes for screening and monitoring members. Thus, they tend to view members of such organisations as trustworthy, requiring less careful screening before being granted contact with children, and requiring less arduous monitoring after being granted contact with children (McAlinden, 2006). As described in Case Study No. 2, Jonathan Lord appeared to take advantage of his employment by YMCA NSW's Caringbah OSHC to obtain private jobs babysitting several children enrolled in OSHC, some of whom he sexually abused.

otherwise might avoid (Palmer, 2012: 105, 195–196). When a person takes a small step in the direction of engaging in misconduct, they alter the benchmark against which they evaluate their future behaviour (Bazerman, 2006). They also tend to become desensitised to engaging in behaviour that borders on misconduct, making them less averse to engaging in more questionable behaviour in the future (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). Finally, they tend to rationalise their borderline behaviour, justifying even more questionable behaviour in the future (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).<sup>8</sup> It is well recognised that psychological, physical and sexual abuse of children often go hand in hand (Goldsworthy, 2015). Crescive processes may account for this correlation; most relevant to this report, engaging in psychological abuse may lead to physical abuse, which may lead to sexual abuse.

A person may take a small step in the direction of engaging in child sexual abuse – participating in questionable behaviour, for many reasons. These include the uncertainty over where the lines lie between acceptable and unacceptable social interaction. In the case of adult–child abuse, perpetrators may be unsure of where the line between acceptable and unacceptable adult–child relationships is drawn; for instance, when a coach initiates ‘inappropriate behaviour’ with an athlete they are training (Parent, 2011). In the case of child-to-child abuse, perpetrators may be ignorant of social norms and the law; for instance, when a boy in high school who is over the legal age of consent develops a so-called ‘Romeo and Juliet’ sexual relationship with a girl who is below the age of consent (Stillman 2016). While perpetrators of child sexual abuse sometimes initiate sexually abusive relationships with children in a less than fully rational way, their behaviour in such circumstances should not be considered ‘accidental’. They are still self-conscious actors; that is, they possess desires and set out to satisfy them. For example, some young teachers who take a small step in the direction of abusing a student may do so because they possess a ‘misplaced sense of privilege’ (Shakeshaft, 2004, 2014).

Before moving on, four caveats to this discussion of the process through which child sexual abuse occurs in institutional contexts must be stated. First, this discussion of the ways in which child sexual abuse can occur in institutional contexts (for example, in a discrete moment, unfolding over time according to a perpetrator’s strategic designs, and unfolding

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<sup>8</sup> Theorists who study ethical decision-making have noted the tendency of observers to view unethical behaviour as completely rational after the fact, when the behaviour was ‘boundedly rational’ (i.e., less than completely rational, pursued without full information and without thorough analysis of the information available) in the moment. This tendency likely leads scholars, social workers and law enforcement officials to underestimate the frequency with which child sexual abuse is crescive in character. Insofar as hindsight is 20/20, it is easy to interpret behaviours preceding sexual abuse as laying the foundation for the abuse (that is, grooming) after the fact, rather than recognise such behaviours as being ‘boundedly rational’ in the moment.

in a crecive fashion) does not imply that one or another of the processes are more common. The literature on child sexual abuse focuses mainly on abuse that unfolds over time according to a perpetrator's fully rational and strategic designs, perhaps because this is the principal way in which abuse occurs in institutional contexts. Most of the instances of child sexual abuse documented in the Royal Commission case studies examined by the author either occurred in a discrete moment (for example, the abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls at Hay described in Case Study No. 7) or unfolded over time according to a perpetrator's strategic designs (for example, the abuse at the swimming clubs affiliated with Swimming Australia described in Case No. 15).<sup>9</sup>

Second, while the paths by which perpetrators come to abuse children may vary, they do not correspond with the variation in the *extent* of perpetrators' status and power advantages over their victims. In all cases, perpetrators who sexually abuse children enjoy greater status and power than their victims (Green, 2001; Shakeshaft, 2004; Colton et al., 2010; Moulden et al., 2010; Goldsworthy, 2015). However, the expression of power likely differs across the three paths that lead to child sexual abuse, with power manifesting itself in a more explicit fashion (that is, more frequently taking the form of overt threats) in abuse that occurs in a discrete moment.

Third, while the ways that perpetrators come to abuse children may vary, this does not correspond with the variation in the *extent* to which children are abused. Most importantly, whether abuse results from the fully rational and strategic behaviour of perpetrators or it unfolds crecively, children are victimised in equal measure.

Fourth, any analysis that reveals perpetrators to be less than fully rational and strategic in pursuit of their desires does not relieve perpetrators of moral responsibility for their actions. The social science analysis of deviant behaviour and the moral appraisal of that behaviour are related, but by no means equivalent enterprises (Palmer, 2012).

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<sup>9</sup> While the literature focuses on child sexual abuse perpetrated by individuals who rationally and strategically gain access to vulnerable children and groom victims and their guardians, it recognises that some perpetrators in institutional contexts do not join organisations or pursue roles in organisations with the intent of abusing children (Wurtele, 2012; Richards, 2011). It also recognises that perpetrators of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts discover their sexual interest in children or a specific child while working with them (Lanning & Dietz, 2014). This report suggests that some perpetrators of child sexual abuse who fall into the above two categories pursue a less than fully rational and strategic path (that is, they pursue a crecive path) to abusing the children in their care.

### **3.1.2 Background issues relating to the detection of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts**

There are three factors that may inhibit the detection of child sexual abuse in all institutional contexts, although their influence varies across organisational contexts. First, by their very nature, formal organisations transform substantive problems into technical ones. In doing so, they tend to diminish organisational participants' feeling that they are morally responsible for their actions. Formal organisations use hierarchical and horizontal divisions of labour that compartmentalise organisational participants' responsibilities. They also use policies and procedures that specify how participants are to fulfil their responsibilities. Accordingly, participants focus on the most efficient ways to accomplish their assigned tasks rather than on the merits (including the moral merits) of these tasks and their outcomes. This tendency has been identified as a root cause of organisational misconduct ranging from the Holocaust (Bauman, 1989) to child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and other institutions (Hinings & Mauws, 2006; Staller, 2012).

The fundamental tendency of formal organisations to transform substantive problems into technical ones likely inhibits the detection of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. Members of formal organisations may overlook red flags that indicate that child sexual abuse is occurring because the detection of child sexual abuse is not their primary responsibility. This tendency was evident in YMCA NSW's Caringbah OSHC facility. The Counsel Assisting in the investigation of Jonathan Lord's abuse of children at the Caringbah OSHC facility contended that the facility 'did not have a culture of extended guardianship'. The authors of the case study concurred, contending that Caringbah's staff did not exhibit 'shared personal responsibility to keep children safe' (Case Study No. 2: 72).

Second, when child sexual abuse evolves over time, victims may collaborate in the early stages of the abusive relationship, albeit subject to significant psychological and sometimes physical constraint. Indeed, Parent (2011: 323), following Brackenridge (1997, 2001), defines sexual abuse as 'coerced collaboration in sexual acts, involving manipulation or constraint'. For example, some students at the Horace Mann elite prep school in the United States willingly accepted invitations to participate in drinking parties with their teachers, who then abused them when they became intoxicated (Kamil, 2012). Similarly, a female student at the elite Saint Paul's Boarding School, who was under the age of consent, accepted an invitation from an older student, who was above the age of consent, to go with him to a secluded spot on campus as part of a school ritual during which the male student sexually assaulted the girl (Bidgood, 2015).

In such circumstances, the perpetrator and third-party observers (including those representing the institution) may claim that the victim of abuse was complicit in the abuse. This construction is considered an abuse tactic in the feminist-informed scholarship about

child sexual abuse and domestic violence, and in some cases it may be internalised by the victim (Gavey, 2013; Humphreys, 2007; Morris, 2009; Smith & Freyd, 2014). Victims may fear that if their abuse is reported, others may consider them partially responsible for the abuse. It is likely that this would lead children and young people to be reluctant to disclose child sexual abuse. When victims are reluctant to report sexual abuse, the likelihood that the abuse will be detected is reduced. This is evident in the reports of women testifying before the Royal Commission about abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls at Hay. Even women who experienced forcible abuse at these institutions were reluctant to report the abuse because they felt 'ashamed' at having been abused (Case Study No. 7: 24).

Third, just as status and power differentials play a role in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, they also play a role in the detection of abuse. The more status and power the perpetrators and their allies possess in an organisation, the more difficult it will be for victims and third-party observers to have their disclosures heard and believed. Victims and third-party observers may pay the price for disclosing abuse with retaliation by the perpetrator and institution.

### **3.1.3 Background issues relating to responses to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts**

There are five factors that may impede the response to child sexual abuse in all organisations, although their influence varies across organisational contexts.

First, individuals tend to overlook or minimise the significance of events that would have negative consequences for them if fully appreciated. This tendency, referred to as 'motivated blindness', is rooted in the fact that people have limited cognitive capacity. As a result, people observe and make sense of only a subset of the developments that occur in their environment (that is, people only 'see' a small portion of what is in their field of vision at any moment). Further, when faced with the problem of allocating limited attention to myriad stimuli, people are influenced by their unconscious motivations. One unconscious motivation that people experience is the drive to ignore information that, if recognised, would require them to take actions that conflict with their practical interests (Moore et al., 2006; Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011).

This may be *one* reason why the managers and staff of organisations delivering services to children and young people may fail to see or correctly interpret behaviours that constitute grooming and abuse. It may also be *one* reason why the Royal Commission's case studies describe many instances in which organisational staff and survivors of child sexual abuse disagree about events relating to past abuse. For example, in Case Study No. 32, which focuses on abuse at Geelong Grammar School, the mother of victim BKM testified that she

met the principal, Mr John Lewis, shortly after her son was abused. In her testimony, she described the abuse of her son by Jonathon Harvey, a teacher at the school, as constituting 'sexual advances'. However, Mr Lewis testified that BKM's mother only complained that Harvey tried to massage her son's thigh after a rugby injury.

Second, human beings tend to be uncomfortable when confronted with contradictory conceptions of themselves as 'good people' and perceptions of their behaviours as 'bad acts'. People tend to cope with such contradictions, referred to as 'cognitive dissonance', in one of two ways. They can avoid the dissonance by ignoring the behaviours that generate the dissonance (for example, by dismissing the behaviours as accidental or one-time occurrences), or they can reduce the dissonance, by altering their perceptions of their behaviours so that the perceptions tally with their positive sense of self; that is, they reinterpret their 'bad' behaviours as 'good' (Festinger, 1962; Aronson, 1973; Alicke & Sedikidis, 2011). For this reason, organisational managers and staff may interpret grooming behaviours and acts of child sexual abuse as benign or insignificant.

Third, people tend to seek interaction with others in their environment, because social interaction provides benefits. These included the ability to pursue valued goals, engage in enjoyable activities, associate with attractive others and obtain access to externalities such as the development of work-related knowledge and skills (Shaw, 1971). Further, people tend to comply with the requests of those with whom they interact to retain the benefits of that interaction. In the context of organisations delivering services to children and young people, staff may be reluctant to report co-workers they suspect or even believe are engaged in child sexual abuse, fearing that this would disrupt their valued relationships with the perpetrators and other staff members who might support the perpetrators.

Fourth, all social groups tend to develop an understanding of what makes their members different from those who are not members of the group. This tendency can manifest itself as 'in-group bias', in which group members consider themselves better than non-group members in multiple dimensions (Brewer, 1999; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998; Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011). When social groups are highly cohesive, this in-group bias may generate in a group's members a sense of moral superiority. When outsiders criticise such groups, they are prone to groupthink, in which they discount the significance of outsiders' criticisms. They do so partly because they view the outsiders to be motivated by self-interest rather than legitimate concern (Janis, 1971). This appears to have been true in the case of the Catholic Church, which initially claimed that reports of priest-perpetrated child sexual abuse were motivated by anti-Catholic sentiments (Kay, 2002; McGrory, 2002; Archdiocese of Boston, 2002; Bartunek, 2006).

Fifth, just as status and power differentials play a role in the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, they also play a role in the response to the abuse. The more status and power that perpetrators of child sexual abuse and their allies

possess in an organisation, the less able victims and third-party observers will be to get an effective institutional response that stops the abuse and leads to prosecution and institutional reform.

### **3.2 Background issues relating to culture**

All members of organisations that deliver services to children and young people – whether children, or the adults who teach, coach, supervise or otherwise care for them – are also members of the larger society in which their organisations are situated. This section considers some of the societal-level cultural influences that might be related to the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it. These influences likely impact all members of organisations delivering services to children and young people, albeit to different degrees depending on the extent to which the cultural influences permeate the organisation.

#### **3.2.1 Societal and historical variation in conceptions of child sexual abuse as a social problem**

The degree to which child sexual abuse is defined as a social problem – that is, the degree to which it is considered a behaviour that is prevalent, harmful, morally repugnant and needing to be addressed – varies across geopolitical jurisdictions. Sexual behaviours by adults that are seen as abusive in contemporary developed societies may be considered normal behaviours in some present-day developing societies (Goldsworthy, 2015).

More relevant to this report, the degree to which child sexual abuse is defined as a social problem has also varied over time (Boxall, Tomison & Hulme, 2014). For example, child sexual abuse in residential care in the United Kingdom didn't receive significant attention until the 1980s. At that time, child sexual abuse in institutional contexts was considered an individual matter, rather than an institutional problem. However, in the mid-1980s, child sexual abuse in residential care was recognised as an institutional problem and the government conducted reviews and inquiries in the wake of high-profile cases of child sexual abuse (Sen et al., 2008). Scholars and activists associated with the Second Wave Feminist Movement during the 1970s increased awareness about child sexual abuse (Carmody, 2006; Gavey, 1990; Humphreys, 1992). Others maintain that it was a consequence of a global cultural trend in which the basic rights of individuals became more important than sanctified bodies such as the family, ethnic communities and religious organisations (Frank, Camp & Boutcher, 2010).

Historical variation in the definitions of child sexual abuse as a social problem in Australia is evident in the Royal Commission case studies reviewed for this report. For example, Case Study No. 32 documents repeated instances of child sexual abuse perpetrated by Geelong Grammar School staff against students between 1940 and 2000. It indicates that when the

school's senior officials were informed about the abuse, their response was slow and ineffectual. Abusers were merely questioned about their behaviour and allowed to remain on staff, or in a few cases asked to resign. By contrast, when it was reported that a Geelong Grammar teacher took photos up the skirts of female students on a field trip in 2007, the response of the school's top officials was swift and robust. The school immediately launched a thorough investigation, and when it was completed reported the abuse to police and suspended the abuser.

However, in most contemporary developed societies, child sexual abuse is considered a particularly heinous type of social deviation.<sup>10</sup> As a result, people who have been judged to have perpetrated child sexual abuse are stigmatised; that is, are viewed as inherently aberrant and requiring close monitoring (Turner & Rubin, 2002; Levenson et al., 2007; Arkowitz & Lilienfeld, 2008). Further, child victims of sexual abuse experience stigma; that is, they experience abuse-specific shame and self-blame (Feiring, Simon & Cleland, 2009). Finally, those associated with people judged to have perpetrated child sexual abuse and those associated with the victims of that abuse may be stigmatised, even when they are not implicated in the abuse.

The sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) was among the first to systematically investigate stigma and stigma by association. 'Stigma' can be considered a black mark on a person's identity that obscures their other positive and negative traits. Like a physical black mark that can be transferred to another person, stigma can be transferred to others associated with the stigmatised person. Once stigmatised, either directly or by association, people are devalued by others in their environment and treated with disdain and shunned. Thus, the victims of child sexual abuse and third-party witnesses may be reluctant to disclose the abuse out of fear of being stigmatised and experiencing the negative consequences.

Concerns about stigma affecting the likelihood that victims will report their abuse is evident in Case Study No. 15, which details abuse perpetrated by members of the Australian swimming community. For example, AEA, who was a victim of abuse perpetrated by Terrance Buck, delayed reporting the abuse until very late in life because he feared the negative effect it might have on his reputation. Buck and AEA were fellow swimmers at the time of the abuse and both went on to become coaches, although Buck's swimming and coaching career eclipsed that of AEA. According to Case Study No. 15, 'as a swimming coach himself, AEA was concerned that "any publicity about child sexual abuse would seem sinister" [AEA's words] and could affect his livelihood'.

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<sup>10</sup> Thus, inmates convicted of child sexual abuse occupy the lowest rung in prison status hierarchies.



### **3.2.2 Cultural stereotypes relating to childhood**

Assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms relating to childhood vary across societal cultures. They differ with respect to the age that childhood is assumed to end and adulthood begins, and so they also differ about the age at which individuals may engage in consensual sex. These differences are reflected in different legal definitions of the 'age of consent', which can be a determining factor in whether a sexual relationship is considered abusive or consensual.

More importantly, societal cultures differ with respect to the nature of childhood; that is, the ways in which children are assumed to differ from adults. In most developed societies, children are assumed to possess inferior cognitive capacities and undeveloped moral reasoning. Thus, they are considered to be less accurate observers and interpreters of their experience (Strober et al., 2014). These cultural assumptions may impede children's efforts to disclose sexual abuse when it occurs.<sup>11</sup> However, there is variation in cultural understandings of childhood across organisations in developed societies, and the impact that variation may have on the detection of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts is explicitly considered in Section 5.5.

### **3.2.3 Cultural stereotypes relating to gender**

Societal cultures differ in their assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms relating to gender differences, which may have complex and contradictory impacts on the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in institutions.

Feminist scholars contend that in patriarchal societies, men are privileged over women in a wide range of domains, ranging from small group interaction to educational, occupational and economic advancement. Men are given greater leeway to act, while women are afforded narrower opportunities. Further, the actions of men are seen as more significant, often giving them greater influence than women (Butler, 1993; Grosz, 1990; Gunew, 1990; Lykke, 2010). Several studies have demonstrated that in mixed-sex groups, women are given fewer opportunities to speak and women's words are given less credence (Zimmerman & West, 1996; Hancock & Rubin, 2014).

It is likely that these cultural understandings of gender inform the response to child sexual abuse (Featherstone, 1994; Cooney, 2016; Humphreys, 1992; Middleton, 2014). In an institutional context, the people most likely to detect instances of child sexual abuse are

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<sup>11</sup> Recognising the ambiguities inherent in interpreting children's reports of child sexual abuse, some scholars have studied alternative ways to use children's testimony in cases involving such abuse (Lindblad & Kaldal 2000, 2004).

rank and file workers in closest contact with perpetrators and victims. To trigger an institutional response to abuse, they must make credible reports about the abuse to their organisation's leadership. However, in private sector organisations, men tend to fill upper-level management positions (Weinger, 2015). Further, in the not-for-profit sector, men tend to fill upper-level management positions, while women fill lower-level staff positions (Wilson, 2009). There is no evidence to suggest that the situation is any different in organisations that deliver services to children and young people. As a result, it may be that many detected instances of child sexual abuse fail to trigger a robust institutional response simply because they are observed by women and communicated to men (Parkin & Green, 1997; Green, 2001).

Further, scholars associated with cultural studies have argued that cultural constructions of gender extend to the domain of sexual behaviours (Butler, 1993; Foucault, 1976; Powell, 2008). In patriarchal societies, men are assumed to possess strong sexual impulses and their pursuit of sexual gratification is viewed positively and considered normative. In contrast, women are constructed as possessing weaker sexual drives and their submissiveness is valued and considered normal (Irigaray, 1985). Some feminist scholars argue that contemporary western patriarchies feature 'rape cultures' that endorse men's sexual aggression against women and girls (Buchwald, Fletcher & Roth, 2005; Sills, 2016; Tankart-Reist, 2012). These cultural understandings may influence the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it (Pringle, 1993). The evidence indicates that more than 90 per cent of child sexual abuse perpetrators are male, and that girls are up to three times more likely to be victimised than boys (Quadara, 2015). However, some women do perpetrate child sexual abuse and around 8 per cent of boys are victims of child sexual abuse before the age of 18 (Pereda et al., 2009; Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). Some scholars contend that the fact that most child sexual abuse perpetrators are male and most victims are female has given rise to cultural stereotypes that lead observers, including academic researchers, to overlook female perpetrators and male victims (Mendel, 1995; Parkin & Green, 1997; Hartill, 2005).

Finally, dominant cultural understandings of gender, which some refer to as 'hegemonic constructions of masculinity' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), may inhibit boys from disclosing child sexual abuse, especially abuse perpetrated by males. Hegemonic constructions of masculinity encourage men and boys to see themselves as 'powerful, active, and competent, rather than as passive, helpless or victimized'; eschew self-concepts that acknowledge 'weakness or helplessness'; see themselves as 'eternally sexually willing and eager'; and view 'homosexual involvement' as deviant and stigmatising (Mendel, 1995: 17–19). As a result, male victims of child sexual abuse may see themselves as partly responsible for their abuse. Further, boys may feel concerned about the impact of the abuse on their sexual identities, especially abuse perpetrated by males. Both perceptions are likely to deter boys from disclosing abuse.

### **3.2.4 Cultural stereotypes relating to sexual orientation and race**

Societal cultures differ in their assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms relating to sexual orientation and race. In patriarchal societies, heterosexuality is assumed to be morally superior, psychologically healthier and normative relative to homosexuality (Grosz, 1995; McDonald, 2015; Rasmussen, 2014). These assumptions are particularly evident in relation to male homosexuality as compared with lesbianism. This cultural understanding leads some organisational participants to assume that heterosexual men are less likely to sexually abuse children, especially boys, than gay men. Similarly, victims of child sexual abuse by same-sex perpetrators are assumed to be homosexual or lesbian. For these reasons, male heterosexual abusers may be more likely to escape detection and male victims of same-sex abuse may face significant barriers to reporting their abuse. However, at least one piece of research indicates that men who identify as heterosexual are just as likely as men who identify as homosexual to perpetrate child sexual abuse (Green, 2001).

Further, in societies where wealth, status and power are concentrated in the hands of people from Anglo cultural backgrounds, individuals of other backgrounds are considered inferior along multiple dimensions. This cultural understanding of race, along with the cultural understanding of sexual orientation described above, may jointly impede the detection and response to child sexual abuse. Organisations that deliver services to children and young people tend to be stratified by race and sexual orientation, with upper-level positions occupied by people from Anglo cultural backgrounds, who identify as heterosexual, while lower-level positions are likely to be filled by people of diverse cultural backgrounds who identify as lesbian, gay, gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender or intersex (LGBTI). Parkin and Green (1997) contend that people of Anglo cultural heritage who identify as heterosexual are likely to consider individuals of diverse ethnic background and those who identify as LGBTI as untrustworthy reporters of sexual abuse.

Similarly, organisations such as juvenile detention and residential facilities mainly care for children and young people from racial minorities. Staff members of these organisations may judge those in their care to be untrustworthy reporters of sexual abuse. And this may impede victims' attempts to disclose abuse they experience or observe, and ultimately undermine their inclination to report abuse. Indicative of this, many of the young people interned at Turana, Winlaton and Baltara that are described in Case Study No. 30 were members of a racial minority and often came from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Several such survivors of abuse at these institutions testified that they did not report the abuse at the time because they thought no one would believe them (and reporting the abuse would not generate any benefits to counterbalance the negative consequences of reporting discussed above).

#### **4. The cultures of total institutions and their implications for child sexual abuse in institutional contexts**

The sociologist Erving Goffman (1961) identified an 'ideal type' of formal organisation that envelops its members more comprehensively than other types. This ideal type, called a 'total institution', has four defining characteristics. First, total institutions consist of staff and 'inmates', of which there can be numerous types (for example, prisoners, psychiatric patients, military academy cadets, children's home residents and boarding school students). Second, the staff in total institutions exert nearly total control over all aspects of inmates' lives. These lives are conducted within a confined physical space (for example, a prison, military academy campus, residential facility or school grounds), and senior staff indirectly control inmates' lives through supervisory staff. Third, staff members in total institutions exert much of their control over inmates' lives via impersonal formalised rules and procedures. Finally, while total institutions may have a variety of purposes, their principal objective is the transformation of human beings. Specifically, while Goffman identifies five purposes for which total institutions are established (1961: 4–5), he concludes that all total institutions 'are forcing houses for changing persons; each is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self' (1961: 12).<sup>12</sup>

For example, prisons are composed of senior staff and guards (who spend only the workday on the prison grounds) and inmates (who live in the prison). The senior staff members direct guards, who control nearly all aspects of inmates' lives. They determine where inmates are placed in physical space (for example, whether to transfer them between facilities, and within facilities, or from a group setting to isolation); what they can possess (for example, personal items); how they are to dress (for example, importantly, whether to remove their clothes); when and with whom they can speak (for example, to peers); what they can speak (for example, whether they can criticise staff); and even how they are to speak (for example, whether they can look directly at staff when communicating with them). Staff members control inmates' lives using rigid schedules and inflexible rules. Finally, although prisons have many official purposes (including transforming convicted criminals into model citizens, protecting law-abiding people from dangerous elements and meting out social justice), their first priority is to transform inmates into model prisoners and ultimately model citizens.

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<sup>12</sup> However, Goffman (1961) acknowledged that the inmates of total institutions have limited domains in which they can exert control over their lives. In addition, they sometimes act as if they have changed (that is, they perform as one might in a theatrical production) rather than actually change in ways the institution wants, and sometimes collaborate in their own control. Scott (2010) has developed this acknowledgement into a critique of Goffman's analysis of the total institutional ideal type. She has used this critique as the basis of her analysis of another emerging ideal type of organisation that she dubs the 'reinventive institution'.

Goffman's ideal type is consistent with Max Weber's use of the construct (Shils & Finch, 2011). Weber introduced the concept of an ideal type as a methodological device to aid in the analysis of social phenomena. In his formulation, ideal types have attributes that are characteristic of a social phenomenon, although not all of these attributes may be manifest in every instance of the social phenomenon, and some might be manifest in other social phenomenon. Thus, Goffman offers the following caveat at the beginning of his analysis of the total institution ideal type, 'none of the elements I will describe seems peculiar to total institutions, and none seems to be shared by every one of them' (1961: 5).

There are few pure total institutions in developed societies such as Australia. The residential facilities described in Case Study No. 7 (Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay) and Case Study No. 30 (Turana, Winlaton and Baltara – all either youth training or reception centres) are quintessential total institutions according to Goffman's framework. Specifically, they correspond with the intersection of the first and third categories of total institution, which include organisations created 'to care for persons felt to be both incapable and harmless' and organisations established 'to protect the community against what are felt to be intentional dangers' (Goffman, 1961: 4–5). The boarding school facilities described in Case Study No. 32 (Geelong Grammar School) are also total institutions. They fall in the fourth category of total institution, which includes organisations devoted 'to pursue some worklike task' (Goffman, 1961: 5).

However, there are many organisations in developed societies such as Australia that exhibit some characteristics of the total institution ideal type. The Catholic Church Diocese described in Case Study No. 14 (Catholic Diocese of Wollongong's response to allegations against a Priest, John Gerard Nestor) resembles a total institution in several respects relating to priests. Although ordained priests' lives are not restricted to a demarcated geographic space, their lives are constrained by their role in the priesthood. While some priests may live independently and even pursue separate careers, many live on Church property and pursue careers entirely within the Church. Further, the Church regulates priests' dress and appearance, personal property, work assignments and interpersonal relationships (in particular, sexual relationships) in accordance with Church doctrine and the Code of Canon Law. Further, priests' identities have been crafted in quintessential total institutions – cloisters – that fall into Goffman's fifth type of total institution (1961: 5).

The day school described in Case Study No. 9 (St Ann's Special School) resembles a total institution to a lesser extent. Due to their disabilities, students' waking hours are largely confined to the school and home. Further, students' time in school likely took precedence over time at home, as suggested by the fact that parents appeared to defer to school staff in the transportation and care of the children.

Most organisations in developed societies such as Australia do not conform to the total institution ideal type. But some organisations have some of the structures and processes

typical of total institutions. The childcare centre described in Case Study No. 2 and the swimming clubs described in Case Study No. 15 are not total institutions. But some of the structures and processes that are typical of total institutions are found in these organisations.

Thus, there are three reasons why it is important to examine the ways in which the culture of total institutions relates to the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it. First, a good number of the organisations the Royal Commission investigated are quintessential total institutions, three of which are included in this report. Second, a good number of the organisations the Royal Commission investigated have key attributes of the total institution ideal type, even if they are not quintessential total institutions, two of which are included in this report. Third, some of the cultural forces operating in total institutions can be found in other organisations the Royal Commission investigated that do not correspond to the total institution ideal type, two of which are included in this report.

The following analysis is mainly based on the work of Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1961). But it also draws on the work of psychologist Philip Zimbardo (2010) and his colleagues (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973). Neither Goffman nor Zimbardo directly addressed the topic of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, but several contributors to the literature on child sexual abuse in such contexts reference their work (for example, Parkin & Green, 1997; Green, 2001; Keenan, 2012).

#### **4.1 Total institutions constitute alternative moral universes**

The *overriding imperative* of all total institutions is the near total control of members. Thus, total institutions typically comprise alternative moral universes; that is, they possess an internal apparatus for labelling and responding to deviant behaviour that is independent of civil society. Further, total institutions tend to exhibit cultural content that supports and shapes the expression of this internal apparatus. This is particularly evident in military organisations, which have their own behavioural healthcare systems for treating service members believed to be suffering from psychological problems. They also have their own judicial and prison systems for processing service members believed to have violated military statutes governing appropriate conduct. It is also discernable in universities and grammar and secondary schools that have quasi-formalised systems for investigating and adjudicating violations of codes of conduct.

As indicated above, the Catholic Church exhibits elements of the total institution ideal type. The Church has an alternative moral universe in which priests' behaviour is regulated through the application of the Code of Canon Law – and society's civil law. Canon law articulates administrative and penal codes and stipulates specialised roles, and has standardised and formalised processes for implementing them. Further, members of the

Church treat it as a manifestation of divine inspiration. The Catholic Church's alternative moral universe influenced its response to the piecemeal disclosures of child sexual abuse in the latter half of the 20th century, which exploded into a public scandal early in the 21st century.

Rather than refer alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse to external authorities for investigation, the Church conducted its own investigations and made its own determinations about the guilt or innocence of suspects. In addition, rather than turn proven abusers over to civil authorities for sentencing, it handed down its own sentences. The character of the sentences is discussed below in connection with the Catholic Church's theory of human transformation (*The Boston Globe*, 2002).<sup>13</sup> The salience of the Catholic Church's alternative moral universe was evident in the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong's response to evidence that one of its priests, Father Nestor, sexually abused several child parishioners. As reported in Case Study No. 14, even though the Diocese of Wollongong's leadership eventually expelled Nestor from the church, its attempts to do so were hampered and slowed because it felt the need to comply with the Code of Canon Law and legal processes at every step.

In many instances, total institutions are explicitly exempted from complying with the laws of civil society. For example, as late as 2013, religious clergy in the United States were exempted from mandatory sex abuse reporting requirements imposed on other organisational participants working with children (for example, teachers, social workers and healthcare professionals) in 22 out of 50 states (Goldenberg, 2013). The Catholic Church leadership in Massachusetts claimed an exemption from mandatory reporting requirements as a Church sex abuse scandal unfolded in the early 2000s (*The Boston Globe*, 2002). However, in other circumstances, total institutions are exempted from complying with the laws of civil society by informal deference on the part of civil society's governing institutions. The Catholic Church appears to have enjoyed such informal deference until the first years of the new century (*The Boston Globe*, 2002).

The Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls at Hay appear to have had legal exclusion or informal deference. One survivor told the Royal Commission that when she told local police about her abuse, they were sympathetic but responded, 'We can't do anything ... It's a government institution and you have been made a ward of the state and they are supposed to be the ones [who look after you]'. However, recent reforms have significantly curtailed legal exemptions from mandatory reporting requirements for

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<sup>13</sup> Neustein and Leshner (2008) describe a case in which the Orthodox Jewish community in New York City similarly used an independent judicial apparatus to adjudicate complaints against an alleged perpetrator of child sexual abuse, ultimately vindicating the abuser and stigmatising the victim and his family.

total institutions that provide services to children and young people. Further, other reforms have exposed total institutions that provide services to children and young people to increasingly intrusive scrutiny and regulation by governmental agencies and professional societies.

#### **4.2 Total institutions employ theories of human transformation and embrace assumptions about human nature**

Total institutions that aspire to transform human beings in one way or another use implicit theories about how human beings change, and embrace assumptions about human nature that underpin those theories. Total institutions that have transformation as their official purpose use explicit theories of change and embrace explicit assumptions about human nature. For example, psychiatric hospitals that subscribe to the medical model assume their patients are sick, and use psychoanalytic techniques in which patients play a passive rather than a collaborative role in their own recovery. Total institutions' theories of human transformation and assumptions about human nature may influence the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in these institutions.

To understand the influence that a total institution's theory and assumptions can have on child sexual abuse, it is necessary to examine that institution's theories and assumptions. For example, men who are ordained as priests in the Mormon Church are socialised to consider themselves as part of a 'benevolent protectorate'. This assumption might be expected to inhibit Church leaders from sexually abusing members of their congregation. However, both male and female parishioners in the Mormon Church are socialised to avoid expressions of anger and negative emotions, and are taught that forgiving offences perpetrated against them is a 'divine act'. These norms and beliefs might inhibit parishioners who are victims of sexual abuse from coming forward and pressing their claims for justice (Gerdes et al., 1996). The models and assumptions of two total institutions the Royal Commission studied, and which were scrutinised for this report, are explored below.

The Catholic Church operates according to an elaborate system of beliefs about the fundamental nature of human beings and the ways that nature can be developed. This philosophy is expressed in religious doctrine and canon law. At its root is the assumption that all human beings are by nature sinful, but through confession, penance and sincere efforts at redemption can be forgiven and obtain salvation. All Catholics, both lay people and religious figures, take part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession, penance and absolution). But priests may experience the sacrament, and these values, in a more extensive way because their 'formation' process, which can take up to 15 years, includes reconciliation as a fundamental and regular component of training (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Moreover, by committing to living a religious life after their ordination, priests continue to *personally* take part regularly in the Sacrament of



Reconciliation. This likely leads priests to deeply internalise the idea that all human beings are fundamentally flawed, but always capable of redemption.

Consistent with this fundamental Catholic philosophy, until recently, cardinals, bishops and priests viewed members of the clergy who sexually abused children as sinners capable of redemption. Thus, Church officials in the United States referred priests suspected of abuse for treatment in independent, Church-affiliated, and in some cases Church-run, sexual abuse treatment programs, where offending priests underwent religious and psychological rehabilitation (*The Boston Globe*, 2002: 171–176). In many cases, after the priests completed their religious reflection and psychological treatment, they were reassigned to new parishes. However, this approach failed to alter priests' underlying propensity to perpetrate child sexual abuse and many reoffended.

The way the Catholic Church's system of beliefs continues to influence its disposition towards child sexual abuse is evident in the Diocese of Wollongong's response to evidence that Nestor sexually abused child parishioners in the late 1990s. As shown in Case Study No. 14, even though the Diocese of Wollongong's leadership eventually expelled Nestor from the church, fellow priests who supported him hampered its efforts. They gave Nestor opportunities to preach and minister to members of their parishes, apparently because they perceived he had paid sufficient penance and undertaken adequate rehabilitation to rejoin the ranks of the active clergy.

Out-of-home care residential facilities for young people operate according to fundamental assumptions about the children and young people living in them, together with a rudimentary theory about how they can change their behaviour. For example, orphanages, industrial schools and reformatories in the United Kingdom were created to protect the ruling class (which was seen as respectable) from the lower class (which was seen as dangerous). These abandoned children were thought susceptible to being transformed from so-called delinquent children and young people into law-abiding adults. Further, it was assumed they lacked discipline and needed strict control, including in the domain of sexuality (Coldrey, 2001). In a few high-profile instances, such institutions embraced rehabilitative philosophies that explicitly called for harsh treatment that amounted to psychological and physical abuse of the children and young people in their care. These institutions saw their charges as second-class citizens deserving of abuse. Notorious examples include residential homes that used the 'pindown' method, in which children were physically pinned to the ground (Levy & Kahan, 1991; Stanley et al., 1999). It is recognised in the child protection literature that psychological, physical and sexual abuse often co-occur (Finkelhor, 2007; Goldsworthy, 2015; Higgins, 2004; Miller, 2007; Radford, 2011). This may be because psychological and physical abuse set perpetrators on a process of progressive and incremental boundary violations as described in section 3.1.1., making sexual abuse more likely.

Residential facilities for children and young people are especially likely to embrace a rehabilitative model that amounts to psychological and physical abuse when their charges are members of cultural or linguistic minorities, and subject to discrimination (Green, 2001). In the United States at the turn of the 20th century, boarding schools were created to subject Native American youth to so-called Christian civilising instruction, which entailed gruelling manual labour and emotional, physical and sexual violence (Smith, 2004).

The Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay appear to have operated according to fundamental assumptions about the girls in their care and a basic theory about how their behaviour could be reformed. *Forgotten Australians*, an inquiry into Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children, reported that leaders and staff at the Parramatta Training School had ‘entrenched Victorian attitudes to fallen women and the view that girls were inherently more difficult to reform than boys’. Further, a reading of Case Study No. 7 suggests that the leaders and staff of Parramatta and Hay assumed that the girls in their care were prone to engaging in problematic behaviour, including problematic sexual behaviour.

Indicative of this, several of the women providing testimony to the Royal Commission noted that they were not allowed to roll over in bed at night because ‘they were suspected of doing “something disgusting” if they were moving too much’ (Case Study No. 7: 13). These cultural assumptions led the staff at Parramatta and Hay to view the girls as untrustworthy reporters of abuse. This was illustrated by the fact that workers referred to the girls as ‘liars’ and told them that ‘nobody would believe what they said’ (Case Study No. 7: 16). Thus, several of the women told the Royal Commission they did not report the child sexual abuse perpetrated against them because they doubted they would be believed. More fundamentally, these assumptions may have been conducive to the development of the ‘denial of victim’ technique of neutralisation at Parramatta and Hay. Because staff members saw the girls as morally inferior members of society, they may have been inclined to see them as less than ‘full’ victims when abused.

In addition, the leaders and workers at both Parramatta and Hay subscribed to the theory that they could best rehabilitate girls by subjecting them to rigid rules of behaviour and severe punishment when they failed to comply. Indicative of this, several women told the Royal Commission that when they were transferred to the Institution for Girls at Hay, they were greeted by staff members who stated they would ‘make you or break you’. This implicit theory of rehabilitation led to harsh treatment of the girls, including psychological abuse (for example, telling them they were ‘not even worth spitting on’) and physical abuse (for example, punching them with a handful of keys). This abuse might have started the

institutions' staff on a process of progressive and incremental boundary violations of the children in their care.<sup>14</sup>

### **4.3 Total institutions extinguish their members' previous identities**

The transformation of human beings in total institutions begins with the destruction of inmates' pre-institutional identities. Goffman refers to this process as 'mortification of the self' (1961: 28). While this language may be a bit extreme, it is in some cases completely accurate. For example, the motto of the early proponents of using boarding schools to assimilate Native Americans in the United States was 'Kill the Indian in order to save the man' (Smith, 2004: 90). Goffman based his ideas on extinguishing inmates' pre-institutional identities on Sanford Dornbusch's (1955) analysis of the manner in which military academies eradicate cadets' pre-academy selves.

Total institutions destroy their members' identities partly by removing them from supports for their old identities. Specifically, they tend to prohibit members from retaining personal items that remind them of their old identities, from seeking out and forming bonds with peers in their midst who could reinforce their old identities, and from interacting with people in their former environment. Thus, on admission to the Parramatta Training School for Girls, girls were shorn of their hair and separated from their personal items (for example, they were banned from having sanitary napkins). At Hay, they had to stay six feet from fellow inmates in public spaces and keep their heads down when moving about the facility. They were also barred from speaking with fellow inmates for more than 10 minutes a day and weren't allowed extensive contact with the outside world (which was easy to implement as most of the girls had been abandoned by their parents). In a telling reference, one survivor told the Royal Commission that the rules barring communication among peers were designed to 'break the human spirit'.

Total institutions also mortify their members' prior identities through rewards and punishments; members are rewarded for abandoning their old identities and punished for retaining them. The extensive use of punishments for even minor rule infractions was evident at the Parramatta Training School for Girls, the Institution for Girls at Hay and at the Victorian state-run youth training and reception centres.

Finally, total institutions eradicate their members' pre-institutional identities by humiliating them. The tendency of total institutions to control all aspects of inmates' lives humiliates inmates' pre-institutional identities by implying that inmates on entry to the institution are incapable of effective self-control. Thus the girls at Hay were required to march as they

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<sup>14</sup> Coldrey (2001) speculates that in the cultural context described above, sexually abusive behaviour by children and young people against other children and young people may have been a resistance strategy.

moved around the facility, rather than walk in their natural gait. Total institutions also can humiliate inmates' pre-institutional identities by assigning them derogatory names – staff at both Parramatta and Hay frequently called the girls 'sluts,' 'black dogs' and 'prostitutes'. Humiliations can also include violations of inmates' sense of self, physically and psychologically. The girls at Parramatta and Hay were subjected to intrusive body searches and invasive medical exams. They were also forced to let staff members read their personal mail, which, importantly, was done for no particular reason (that is, without having done something to provoke these invasions of the self). Again, in a telling reference, one woman who gave testimony to the Royal Commission referred to their treatment at Parramatta as 'humiliating' and as leaving them 'without pride or self-respect'.

Efforts to wipe out inmates' pre-institutional selves may be particularly intense in total institutions that focus on transforming so-called juvenile delinquents into model citizens. First, the young people in these institutions may be predisposed to resist their authority structure, as suggested by the fact that they have already resisted the direction of other authorities (parents, school teachers and police). Second, and more importantly, the institution's staff may perceive the young person to be morally inferior. For example, BDC, a survivor who gave evidence in Case Study No. 30, was sent to Allambie Children's Home 'for being deemed "likely to lapse into a life of vice and crime" '. Karen Hodgkinson, who testified in the same case study, was sent to Winlaton 'for being "exposed to moral danger" '.

The destruction of inmates' pre-institutional identities has consequences for the way staff members perceive inmates and themselves. Staff members come to see inmates as inanimate objects and themselves as controllers of those objects. When people see others as inanimate objects subject to their control, they see these others as inferior human beings and themselves as superior. The more people see others as inferior and themselves as superior, the less they feel obliged to respect the rights and needs of those others. Kipnis (1972) was the first to empirically demonstrate that the possession and wielding of power can corrupt people's views of themselves and others. Keltner, Gruenfeld and Anderson (2003) have presented an authoritative review of subsequent work that has followed in this vein. Further, Lee-Chai, Chen and Chartrand (2001) have reviewed recent research that links the possession and use of power to sexual aggression. Thus, the mortification of inmates' pre-institutional identities may place the staff members of total institutions on a process of progressive and incremental boundary violations to psychological and physical abuse, and ultimately sexual abuse. Green (2001) observed this tendency in her investigation of the cultures of two local authority residential children's homes in the United Kingdom. In her words, the cultures of these facilities emphasised 'uniformity, control and surveillance over care' and were 'conducive to sexual abuse taking place' because staff tended to focus on these issues, 'becoming de-sensitized to the children's needs and development' (2001: 17).

The mortification of inmates' pre-institutional selves also has implications for the way inmates in total institutions perceive themselves and staff members. Inmates come to see themselves as inanimate objects and understand staff to be their controllers. When people see themselves as inanimate objects controlled by others, they are more likely to view themselves as powerless and succumb to abuse meted out by these others (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, 2010). Thus, the mortification of inmates' pre-institutional selves may inhibit the victims of sexual abuse from successfully resisting and reporting abuse.

#### **4.4 Total institutions promote secrecy**

Total institutions tend to be opaque from the vantage point of their members and the larger society. Staff members withhold information from inmates to control their attitudes and behaviours. As indicated above, total institutions tightly control inmates' lives, determining where in physical space they are located and what they can do in those locations. Inmates are less able to resist staff efforts to control them if they lack information about staff members' intentions in these regards. Hence, several survivors giving evidence about their experiences in Victorian state-run youth training and reception centres reported they were stripsearched, given institutional clothing and placed in holding cells upon induction, all without explanation. Similarly, several survivors reported being subject to intrusive medical examinations without receiving an explanation for the procedure (for example, see Gabrielle Short's testimony in Case Study No. 30: 58–60).

Staff members also limit the ability of inmates to communicate with one another. This restricts the amount of information inmates have about staff intentions and undermines inmates' ability to organise resistance to staff plans. Hence, as noted, girls at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay were rarely allowed to speak to each other. At Hay, they could only speak to each other for 10 minutes a day, had to stay six feet away from each other in public areas and walk with their heads down so they could not easily take note of their peers (Case Study No. 7: 13).

In addition, total institutions tend to restrict the flow of information between high- and low-level staff. They mortify their members' identities, which some staff may consider harsh and even inhumane. Thus, high-level staff members tend to withhold information about their intentions from lower-level staff to obtain their compliance. For example, in military organisations, senior officers only release information to junior officers on a 'need to know' basis.

Finally, staff members in total institutions tend to withhold information about their organisations' operations from the larger society, because this insulates them from the potential influence of interested external actors. Indeed, total institutions often enjoy exemptions from civil and criminal law with respect to the release of information. For

example, correctional facilities tightly regulate contact between prisoners and their friends and families. Similarly, military academies and even some boarding schools limit contact between cadets/students and the outside world (for example, parents and friends), although this constraint is typically relaxed over time (Dornbusch, 1955).

Organisations that resemble total institutions and that provide services to children and young people tend to conduct their operations in secret. This can slow detection and impede responses to child sexual abuse (Green, 2001). This is evident in the Catholic Church's response to survivors' reports of child sexual abuse (Bartunek, 2006; Keenan, 2012). As indicated above, cardinals and bishops were aware that the priests they supervised were perpetrating child sexual abuse, but these high-level officials withheld information about the abuse from other priests, parishioners and the wider community while discreetly enrolling the perpetrators in independent, Church-affiliated or Church-run treatment programs. They would then reassign the perpetrators to parish duty when they were deemed to be rehabilitated (Berry, 1992 cited in Wurtele, 2012; *The Boston Globe*, 2012). Indeed, it is now known that the Church kept detailed but hidden records of offending priests' involvement in abuse and treatment (Boorstein & Zauzmer, 2016; Zauzmer, 2016).

The role that secrecy plays in the perpetration of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts is even evident in organisations that do not exhibit the hallmarks of total institutions. Wurtele (2012) notes that some scholars maintain that organisations that are 'closed systems' facilitate abuse, impede detection and undermine an appropriate response when it occurs, even though these organisations may not exhibit the defining characteristics of total institutions (Etherington, 2000; Hartill, 2005). Hartill (2005: 294) quotes Etherington (2000: 202) who writes, 'closed systems such as schools and hospitals, or local organisations such as boys clubs, sports clubs, scouts or churches ... all offer opportunities for child abuse'. Similarly, Boyle (2014) contends that in the Boy Scouts of America, senior officials withheld information about instances of child sexual abuse from more junior workers, 'quietly' referred abusers to counsellors to 'straighten up' and then permitted the perpetrators to return to active duty in the organisation, enabling them to commit more sexual abuse (see also Yardley, 2000).

#### **4.5 Total institutions exhibit unique power structures**

Power is the capacity to force others to comply with one's requests, even when they wish to do otherwise. Formal power is power derived from one's position in an organisation's chain of command. Formal power relationships operate through the norm of obedience to authority, which is the felt obligation of subordinates to obey the commands of superiors. This norm has been shown to override other imperatives, such as subordinates' contrary rational assessments and normative proclivities. Most famously, Stanley Milgram (1974) conducted laboratory experiments demonstrating that subjects would obey the instructions

of people they believed to be scientific authorities, even when the instructions required them to administer what they believed to be painful electrical shocks to another person. However, formal power relationships are also bolstered by giving rewards that support obedience, and punishments that deter disobedience.

The strength of the norm of obedience to authority, as well as the application of rewards and punishments, varies substantially across organisational contexts. The norm of obedience to authority tends to be very strong in total institutions. Further, the rewards allocated tend to be minimal and the punishments dispensed tend to be severe in such contexts. This is evident in the descriptions of Parramatta, Hay, Turana, Winlton and Baltara. It was also evident in the Retta Dixon Home, which was the subject of a Royal Commission study not provided for analysis.

In these institutions, children and young people almost always obeyed staff members, even when they wished to do otherwise. Similarly, staff members tended to follow superiors' directions to the letter. Finally, in all of these institutions, children and young people received harsh punishments in the form of physical and psychological abuse when they defied staff members. For example, women survivors who were former residents of the Retta Dixon Home testified that staff members struck residents with a belt until they were cut and bled. In one case, a resident who confronted a host 'parent' was stripped of her clothes and chained up in a spare room (La Canna, 2015). One of the most extreme forms of psychological abuse in these institutions was solitary confinement, which is known to have serious adverse psychological effects (Andersen et al., 2000).

Formal power relationships in organisations tend to follow the bureaucratic model. Under this model, superiors govern subordinates, who in turn govern lower-level subordinates – the number of subordinates dwarfing the number of superiors. In these pyramid-like structures, subordinates typically take direction from a single superior and occasionally, his or her superior's superior. Further, power relationships are relatively circumscribed, meaning that superiors command subordinates to engage in or refrain from a relatively narrow range of mainly work-related behaviours.

Formal power relationships between management and staff in total institutions tend to follow the above bureaucratic model. However, formal power relationships between staff and inmates in total institutions depart from the bureaucratic mold. Inmates are required to take direction from any and all staff members. Further, staff can command inmates to engage in, or refrain from, a wide range of behaviours, including when, to whom and how to speak to staff and fellow inmates. This power structure is evident in descriptions of Parramatta, Hay, Turana, Winlton and Baltara. In these institutions, *each* child or young person was required to follow the direction of *any* staff member on a wide range of behaviours. Indeed, this power structure is even evident in smaller group foster homes. Parkin and Green (1997: 76–78) describe a group foster home that embraced a cultural

model that had correctional institution and military overtones. Staff members carried large key rings that jangled at their sides as prison guards might, and referred to their manager as a 'captain' running a 'safe ship'. Further, residents were prohibited from accessing their house's kitchen without staff approval and were fed in a 'regimented' fashion (Parkin & Green 1997: 76–78).

The more power adults possess over children and young people in institutions, the better positioned they are to sexually abuse them (Colten et al., 2010; Moulden et al., 2010). Staff members have an inordinate amount of power over children and young people in total institutions because they can provide direction to any child or young person in the institution. In addition, the direction they provide can cover an exceedingly wide range of behaviours. Most directly, staff members can command children and young people to not demonstrate overt resistance to child sexual abuse perpetrated against them, and to not disclose the abuse. Further, staff members can punish children and young people if they resist sexual abuse or report it. Many former residents at Parramatta and Hay told the Royal Commission they did not actively resist the sexual abuse perpetrated against them because they felt obliged to follow the direction of the perpetrator, or because they feared the negative consequences of resisting.

More indirectly, staff members in total institutions can command children and young people to engage in, or refrain from, behaviours that make abuse possible and reporting less likely. Several former residents at Parramatta and Hay told the Royal Commission that staff sedated them or transferred them to solitary confinement to make it easier for staff members to abuse them. Several survivors also gave evidence that they were sent to solitary confinement after being abused, depriving them of the opportunity to report the abuse. Others testified that they were explicitly threatened with punishment if they were to speak up about their sexual abuse; and some reported being punished when they did speak up (punishment included being placed in solitary confinement and physical abuse). More subtly, several survivors of Parramatta and Hay told the Royal Commission that residents were commanded to only speak to staff when spoken to. Thus, as one survivor testified, unless a staff member asked an inmate whether she had been abused, she could not disclose the abuse.

Finally, there is some evidence that the strong norm of obedience to authority in institutions that were the subject of Case Study No. 7 and Case Study No. 30 inhibited the ability of staff members to report abuse perpetrated by their peers and superiors. Many of the perpetrators were senior officials, including superintendents, deputy superintendents and acting managers (Case Study No. 7: 17). Several survivors told the Royal Commission they believed that lower-level staff members knew about the sexual abuse perpetrated against them. In addition, one survivor reported that when she told a staff member about the



sexual abuse perpetrated against her, that person said: 'I don't know what we can do about it'.

#### **4.6 Total institutions exhibit unique informal group dynamics**

It is common in organisations of all types for people to form informal groups that develop shared understandings of their organisational experience (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1947; Perrow, 1972). Individuals are especially likely to form groups when they perceive themselves to possess common interests in relation to non-group members, or 'outsiders'. The most fundamental understanding that group members are likely to develop is about what makes them different from non-group members, often taking the form of negative stereotypes of outsiders. As informal groups form, they also develop norms about appropriate ways to think and act. These norms are enforced through sanctions that range in severity from subtle cues and verbal recriminations to physical harm. The fundamental norm is to support fellow group members, especially from attacks by non-group members (Shaw, 1971).

Staff and inmates in total institutions constitute separate cohesive informal groups, in which the imperative to support one's fellow group members is particularly strong. Staff members share the common interest to control inmates, who are perceived to represent a threat to their own, and to the institution's, safety. Inmates share the common interest to defend themselves against staff members, who are perceived to be a threat to their psychological and physical wellbeing. Staff members perceive inmates as untrustworthy and generally morally inferior. Inmates perceive staff members as sadistic. These groups' common understandings of each other are sometimes reflected in colloquial language. For example, the children and young people living at Turana referred to staff members as 'screws'.

The tendency of staff members in total institutions to view inmates in stereotypically negative ways – in particular as morally inferior – may facilitate the perpetration, impede the detection and undermine the response to child sexual abuse. Most importantly, the cultural milieu in which staff members in total institutions are immersed tends to feature the 'denial of victim' technique of neutralisation. In this milieu, inmates are viewed as not deserving of ethical treatment and, perhaps, as deserving of unethical treatment. This technique of neutralisation immunises staff members from the guilt they may otherwise experience after abusing a child or young person, failing to report a fellow staff members' abuse or failing to respond to disclosures of abuse.

At the same time, children and young people who report sexual abuse perpetrated by staff members in total institutions are likely to be disbelieved, because they are viewed as untrustworthy and possibly vindictive. Further, the perpetrating workers are likely to be vigorously defended by fellow staff members. In addition, children and young people tend to view staff as uninterested in their welfare and untrustworthy. As a result, children and

young people who are abused will tend to keep the abuse to themselves (Green, 2001). What is more, children and young people who are suspected of falsely accusing a staff member of sexual abuse will be construed as ‘troublemakers’, and punished for their presumed offence. Many of the survivors who gave evidence about Parramatta, Hay, Turana, Winlaton and Baltara recalled that when they reported the sexual abuse perpetrated against them, they were not believed and were punished for disclosing the abuse. Other survivors testified that they did not report the sexual abuse perpetrated against them because they anticipated being punished, and not being believed.

Informal group dynamics in total institutions also affect children and young people’s willingness to report sexual abuse carried out by other children and young people. Like all members of informal groups, inmates feel obliged to support their peers. Inmates who disregard that obligation risk castigation by fellow inmates. It may be that informal group dynamics inhibit children and young people – particularly adolescents who are susceptible to peer pressure – from reporting sexually abusive behaviour by peers (Sprober et al., 2014). Thus, many of the women survivors who testified about their sexual abuse at Winlaton reported that they did not disclose the sexually abusive behaviour of other children and young people because they feared retribution from other residents and being labelled a “lager” or “dobber”. Similar group dynamics can also inhibit third-party reporting of observed abuse. For example, Gabrielle Short said she did not report the sexually abusive behaviour of children and young people at Winlaton because, ‘You just didn’t dob people in, you would get a bashing up or, worse, be raped’ (Case Study No. 30, Submissions Council Assisting: 60).

Finally, in extreme circumstances, informal group dynamics in total institutions may affect a child or young person’s propensity to participate in the sexual abuse of other children and young people. As noted above, informal groups develop norms that group members, especially group leaders, enforce. One informal group norm obliges group members to assist fellow group members in pursuit of their objectives. Sometimes when several individuals collude in organisational misconduct – either actively by participating in the misconduct, or tacitly by not intervening to stop it – some participants do so because they feel socially pressured to do so (Palmer, 2012). Thus, it seems likely that when several children and young people collude in the sexual abuse of a peer – either actively by participating, or tacitly by not intervening to stop the abuse – at least some of them likely do so because they feel socially pressured to do so. Such group dynamics may have been at work in the sexually abusive behaviour involving groups of children and young people at Geelong Grammar School and described by Robert Llewellyn-Jones in Case Study No. 32.

## **5. Other types of organisational culture and their implications for child sexual abuse in institutional contexts**

### **5.1 The culture of institutionalised organisations**

Sometimes organisations become viewed by their members as ends in themselves, independent of the goals they were established to pursue. When this occurs, sociologists say that the organisations have become ‘institutionalised’ or have taken on the character of ‘institutions’ (Selznick, 1949; Clark, 1970). Organisations are likely to become institutions in the sociological sense of the word when their survival hinges more on the extent to which stakeholders perceive them to exemplify cherished values, than on the effectiveness with which they achieve their stated goals. (This may be because goal attainment is difficult to measure or because unattainable goals can be easily modified or abandoned and replaced). Social movement organisations (for example, civil rights organisations), not-for-profit organisations established to accomplish social goals (for example, to provide health care to vulnerable populations), and educational institutions (for example, elite private grammar schools) are examples of organisations that often take on the character of institutions in the sociological sense.

Institutionalised organisations gain the support of their members through the sharing of ‘sagas’ about key junctures in their development (for example, their founding and/or survival in the face of subsequent crises) and the lionisation of their leaders, both of which impart information about the organisation’s cherished values. Further, institutionalised organisations tend to sustain these sagas and the glorification of leaders by giving preferential hiring treatment to persons who are ‘products’ of the organisation (for example, in the case of drug treatment programs, former clients). This was the case at Pennsylvania State University in the United States, where staff, students and alumni exhibited an extreme attachment to the school. This was based partly on the storied history of its football program and the lionisation of its football coach, Joe Paterno, as well as its propensity to give preferential hiring treatment to Penn State alumni (especially former Penn State football players) (Dowler et al., 2014).

When organisations become institutions in the sociological sense, their defence takes on paramount importance in the minds of their members. Threats to the organisation’s image are perceived as issues to be managed to minimise their negative effect. This is the case even when the threats to the organisation’s image are the result of its failure to achieve its goals (for example, revelations that a revered community medical clinic was escalating rather than curtailing drug abuse in its service area). Although this tendency might partially result from conscious rational calculation on the part of an institutionalised organisation’s members – whereby they view the costs of admitting and effectively responding to failure (for example, a damaged reputation) to be greater than the potential benefits of such a

response (for example, improved performance) – it is also likely the result of two unconscious processes.

First, the cultures of institutionalised organisations tend to be extremely strong; that is, members embrace the assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms constituting the culture. As a result, the psychological identities of participants (that is, how they see themselves) become fused with the identity of their organisation (that is, its values). When this happens, organisational participants view an effective response to threats facing the organisation as one that protects their own identity (Vadera & Pratt, 2016). Organisational leaders may exploit this fusing of organisational and individual identities by threatening those who lobby for truly effective responses (for example, organisational reform) with the prospect of expulsion from the organisation. Second, the cultures of institutionalised organisations typically feature the ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ technique of neutralisation. When this happens, participants equate an effective response to threats facing the organisation with efforts to protect the organisation’s image and ensure its survival. Regardless of the underlying motivation, this tendency to view external criticisms as threats generates an aura of secrecy that protects the organisation’s image, both in the eyes of internal constituencies and external audiences.

Thus, when instances of child sexual abuse surface in organisations that fit the sociological definition of an institution, organisational leaders and rank and file members will tend to see these instances as events to be managed in ways that minimise their negative effects on the organisation’s image (Boyle, 2014; Wurtele, 2012). This appears to have been true for the Catholic Church. Members of the clergy withheld information about sexual abuse perpetrated by priests to safeguard the image of the Church (Bartunek, 2006; Keenan, 2012). This also appears to have been true for the Mormon Church, where leaders encouraged victims and adult survivors of child sexual abuse who came forward to ‘forgive the church’ so as not to ‘disturb the image of church leaders as benevolent protectors’. Church leaders threatened to ban victims and survivors who were not persuaded by this argument from public praying or speaking, referred to as ‘disfellowship’ (Gerdes et al., 1996). This also appears to have been the case in Boy Scouts of America, where employees had extreme faith in the integrity of their organisation and its leaders, and responded to disclosures of child sexual abuse by prioritising protecting the organisation’s image over responding effectively to the victims (Boyle, 2014).

The tendency of institutionalised organisations to react to disclosures of child sexual abuse as a threat to their image and survival that must be managed, rather than as a situation requiring remedial action (that is, swift sanction of the perpetrator, robust support and advocacy for victims, and action to stop future abuse) was evident at Geelong Grammar School. The school was established in 1844 and modelled on its traditional British antecedents. It ‘is a prestigious independent school’ with the highest fees in Australia and

counts ‘prominent figures in business, politics, law, and medicine’ among its alumni (as indicated by the fact that it ranks second among Australian grammar schools in the number of alumni to receive Queen’s Birthday honours). Such an organisation – longstanding, elite and touting alumni of high social standing – is likely to exhibit the characteristics of an institution in the sociological sense of the word. Thus, it is not surprising that when the head of the school’s Glamorgan campus, Ms Phillipa Beeson, became aware of child sexual abuse perpetrated by a teacher (BIM), her main concern appears to have been the threat the disclosure posed for the school, rather than the harm caused to the victim (BIR). Following the disclosure of the abuse, Ms Beeson wrote a note in which she stated that she contacted Ivan Sutherland, the prior head of Glamorgan campus who hired the abuser. She wrote that Mr Sutherland acknowledged that he knew the teacher had a prior history of abuse when he hired him. Ms Beeson went on to write ‘My nightmare is knowing about [the teacher] BIM, Ivan still let him take boys on a *REDACTED* weekend. If [the student] BIR get[s] wind of this, we could have a real problem on our hands’ (Case Study No. 32: 20).

In extreme cases, the fusing of an organisation’s culture and its members’ identities may inhibit the detection of child sexual abuse through a mechanism akin to ‘motivated blindness’. Hartill (2013) contends that in religious institutions and male sports organisations, members exhibit a ‘double consciousness’, which leads them to essentially overlook abuse they may observe. In Hartill’s words: ‘The field of sport persistently represents itself ... as a philanthropic force, simply providing healthy, fun, positive opportunities for children to interact, learn, and develop’ (2013: 249). To acknowledge child sexual abuse in this domain threatens to undermine the belief that sport is an unmitigated positive force in children’s lives. Of course, the failure to acknowledge, and to respond to, child sexual abuse can go hand in hand in institutionalised organisations. This appears to have been the case at Pennsylvania State University, where child sexual abuse perpetrated by an assistant football coach was observed by a student assistant. The assistant reported the sexual abuse to the head football coach, who later claimed that he did not understand the report (Dowler et al., 2014).

## **5.2 Macho cultures**

A number of scholars have established a link between what they call ‘macho cultures’ and child sexual abuse (Briggs, 1994; Howitt, 1994, Waterhouse, Dobash & Carnie, 1994; Parkin & Green, 1997; Green, 2001; Green & Masson, 2002; Hartill, 2009). Macho organisational cultures are extensions of patriarchal societal cultures, which were described in section 3.2.3. In patriarchal cultures, males are encouraged to see themselves as powerful and active rather than as helpless and passive. They are also encouraged to eschew self-concepts that acknowledge weakness or susceptibility to victimisation. Further, in macho cultures, males are encouraged to see themselves as ‘sexually willing and eager’. Finally, in macho cultures, males are encouraged to value heterosexuality and view

homosexuality as deviant. As a result, male victims of sexual abuse are more likely than female victims to see themselves as partly responsible for their own abuse. In addition, they are more likely to see their partial responsibility as symptomatic of sexual deviance. Both self-perceptions make it less likely that males will disclose their abuse (Mendel, 1995; Hartil, 2005).

However, macho organisational cultures go beyond patriarchal societal cultures in several ways. In macho cultures, boys are assumed to be naturally aggressive and to be driven to dominate their peers. Thus, when boys behave aggressively towards their peers, adults sometimes understand, characterise and implicitly justify their behaviour as 'just boys being boys'. Further, in macho cultures, aggressive and dominating behaviour towards peers may even be valued because such behaviour is assumed to be a healthy expression of masculinity and even beneficial to group functioning (Fine, 1987; Hartill, 2009). By extension, in macho organisational cultures, boys are assumed to be naturally *sexually* aggressive, and such sexually aggressive behaviour tends to be valued and considered normative. The tolerance of harsh treatment is also valued in macho cultures because it is assumed to indicate strength and maturity, and the reporting of harsh treatment is devalued because it is assumed to be a sign of weakness and to represent an attack against the brotherhood of boys (Mendel, 1995; Hartill, 2005).

Macho organisational cultures are expressed in a variety of ways, including physically aggressive posturing, verbally aggressive communication and use of sexualised slang and homophobic taunts (Parkin & Green, 1997). They are typically found in all-male settings, such as the Boy Scouts, or in male subgroups in mixed-gender settings, such as boys' sports teams in mixed-gender sports clubs (Hartill, 2009). While macho cultures hold most relevance in relation to boys' psychosocial development, the relevance of macho cultures can extend to girls in mixed-gender and even all-girl settings. In particular, cultures can arise in all-girl and mixed-gender settings that convey to girls the assumption that aggressive behaviour is necessary for survival in the setting, and that aggressive behaviour and the tolerance of harsh treatment are desirable traits.

Because macho cultures condition boys to behave aggressively towards peers, and because sexual abuse is a form of aggressive behaviour, boys embedded in macho cultures may be more likely to sexually abuse other children and young people. Further, because macho cultures condition boys to tolerate harsh treatment, boys embedded in macho cultures may be more likely not to disclose sexual abuse perpetrated against them by peers or adults. These tendencies have been cited as facilitating child sexual abuse in boys' sports organisations (Parent & Bannon, 2012: 346). Both tendencies appear to have been present at Geelong Grammar School. They also appear to have been present in the three Winlaton facilities, especially the Goonyah closed facility. The impact that macho cultures can have on girls is illustrated in Case Study No. 30. Survivor BDC described an instance in which two girls

sexually abused her in Goonyah, and another occasion in which she saw two girls sexually abusing another girl. She offered the following explanation for why she did not report the abuse: 'It was part of the culture in Goonyah for girls to abuse each other like this' (Case Study No. 30, Submissions Counsel Assisting: 46).

In addition, boys in macho cultures who are abused by other boys or adults may not feel able to disclose the abuse. Boys who disclose abuse expose themselves to ridicule and rejection by superiors and peers (especially male superiors and peers) because disclosing abuse violates basic cultural tenets about the appropriateness of aggression and stoic tolerance of harsh treatment. Finally, the extreme homophobia that characterises macho cultures may act as a barrier to boys disclosing sexual abuse by men because they open themselves up to the possibility that others will construe them to be homosexual. This could negatively affect their identities and social relationships (Green, 2001). These issues have been cited as explanation of child sexual abuse perpetrated at boys' sporting clubs (Parent & Bannon, 2012). Indeed, Hartill (2009) describes a case in which a male adult perpetrator secured a boy victim's silence by threatening to tell others that the boy was homosexual.

Finally, boys and adults embedded in macho cultures may be inclined to view sexual abuse as natural or even exemplary; thus, it is not worthy of suppression. Further, peers and adults embedded in such cultures may consider it inappropriate to act to suppress the abuse. Both tendencies appear to have been present at Geelong Grammar School, where teachers assumed that boys' aggressive behaviour towards peers was inherent to their nature (that is, boys being boys) and had positive effects, such as being 'good for the soul' and 'toughen(ing) you up' (McKenzie-Murray, 2014).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This section has focused exclusively on the impact that macho cultures can have on boys' development of sexually abusive behaviour, and on their experiences of being victims of child sexual abuse because the literature focuses exclusively on the impact of macho cultures on boys. In addition, the Royal Commission case studies analysed for this report provide examples of the impact of macho cultures on boys. However, macho cultures can also influence adults in ways that make them more likely to perpetrate child sexual abuse. For example, Libby Schaaf, Mayor of Oakland, California, in the United States, attributed a recently disclosed situation of organised abuse, in which several of the city's police officers were sexually abusing a teenage girl, to the police department's 'toxic, macho culture' (Patterson, 2016; Queally, 2016).

### 5.3 Cultures that support child sexual abuse, grooming behaviours and sexually abusive behaviour by young people

#### 5.3.1 Cultures that support child sexual abuse

Organisational cultures can endorse the perpetration of child sexual abuse by leading organisational participants to assume that such abuse is an inherent part of organisational life, even if the abuse is not explicitly framed as a valued and appropriate behaviour. Parkin and Green (1997) provide quotes from former residents of a group home to this effect. For example, they quote one former resident as stating:

*I've seen a girl raped when all of the other kids were holding the door shut and she was being called frigid. I've known girls since [who] talk about being forced into sex they didn't want. And if you were outside a kid's home that would be rape but in a kid's home it is just seen as par for the course (1997: 84).*

There is evidence that the sexual abuse of residents at Turana, Winlaton and Baltara was also viewed in this way. For example, as noted above, BDF testified that she did not report the sexual abuse of her peers at Winlaton because 'she thought the abuse was part of living' in the institution.

Cultural endorsements of child sexual abuse are most likely to emerge in connection with forms of sexual abuse that are less socially proscribed (for example, unwelcome touching, hugging and kissing) and in organisational contexts where the abuse can be viewed as related to organisational goal attainment. For example, some contend that sexual abuse can be 'normalised' (that is, portrayed as acceptable and even expected) in sports organisations, where close psychological and physical relationships between coaches and athletes occur on a regular basis and are viewed as inherent to the athletic training enterprise. For example, Parent writes, 'Given the particular culture of some sports, athletes may normalise inappropriate behaviors and therefore not perceive sexual abuse by the coach as inappropriate' (2011: 323).<sup>16</sup>

Organisational cultures can also endorse abusive behaviour more generally. This might create an environment where sexual abuse is more likely to be perpetrated (that is, place staff members on a process of progressive and incremental boundary violations). Parkin and Green (1997) provide evidence that the managers of some group homes treat their staff in a

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<sup>16</sup> There have been reports of 'ritual abuse' in organisations (specifically day care centres) in which the sexual abuse of children is an integral part of ceremonies that are part and parcel of an integrated system of beliefs (Reinhold, 1990). This type of child sexual abuse, which clearly fits the description of culturally endorsed abuse, is not discussed in this report because there is little evidence that it in fact occurs with any frequency (La Fontaine, 1996).



psychologically and physically abusive fashion. They contend that this leads workers to treat children and young people in their care abusively, which in turn leads children and young people to treat one another abusively. In the scholarship about children and young people with sexually abusive behaviour, this phenomenon is referred to as the victim-to-abuser cycle (McKibbin, Humphreys & Hamilton, 2015). A number of well-researched psychological and social processes might underpin the tendency of some who are abused to abuse others, including social learning, social comparison and desensitisation.<sup>17</sup>

### **5.3.2 Cultures that support behaviours associated with grooming**

Organisational cultures can endorse behaviours associated with grooming or delineate extenuating circumstances in which such behaviours are considered acceptable. Grooming is defined in the literature as a process through which people predisposed to abusing children consciously try to win the trust of their intended victim, the victim's primary guardians and others in the environment (for example, the perpetrator's peers), ensuring the compliance of the intended victim. These behaviours include giving gifts and granting favours, sharing confidences and having progressively more intimate emotional and physical contact.

In some organisational cultures, behaviours that can be used to groom children might be assumed to be integral to a staff member's role and performance (Parent, 2011; Mones, 2014). For example, in sports clubs it may be considered necessary for coaches to have physical contact with athletes in their charge, including contact in which athletes are in various stages of undress (Hartill, 2009). More specifically, in wrestling clubs, coaches may have to physically embrace athletes clad only in singlets to demonstrate strategic manoeuvres. It may also be considered necessary for coaches to develop intimate psychological relationships with athletes. For example, in many sports, coaches may think it is necessary to enquire about and even exert control over an athlete's weight, clothing and schoolwork (Tomlinson & Fleming, 1995; Cense & Brackenridge, 2001).

In other instances, behaviours associated with grooming might be assumed necessary in light of economic constraints. For example, in sports clubs, it may be considered necessary for coaches to transport players to and from competitions and to share rooms with them in overnight stays. This may be because the club or parents cannot afford alternative transportation and accommodation. Consistent with these speculations, the testimony reported in Case Study No. 15 indicated that Scott Volkens sexually abused some of the

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<sup>17</sup> Social learning pertains to the process by which people learn from the experience of others. Social comparison pertains to the process by which people mimic (i.e., simply copy) the attitudes and behaviors of others. Desensitisation is the process by which the negative effects that people experience from their association with a course of action, especially negative psychological effects such as feelings of guilt, decrease with continued exposure to the course of action. Reactance is the tendency to treat

swimmers under his direction while massaging them in temporary caravans before races, and while transporting them to and from training in his car. There is no indication from the case study that fellow coaches or parents considered pre-race massages and personal transportation as abnormal. But Cense and Brackenridge (2001: 70–71) contend that these behaviours constitute ‘athletic risk factors’ for child sexual abuse.

In some cases, behaviours that can be used to groom children might not be considered integral to a staff member’s performance, but might be considered to indicate exemplary fulfilment of expectations (Shakeshaft, 2004; Colton et al., 2010). For example, the headmasters of boarding schools and the parents of students might consider it desirable that students and teachers spend extended time together outside the classroom, interacting as equals. This could be seen as showing that teachers’ interest in students’ development was ‘above and beyond the call of duty’. Similarly, in childcare centres, supervisors and parents might consider physical displays of affection towards children (manifested in horseplay, hugging and kissing) as indicating desirable staff member interest in and concern for children. Indeed, as reported in Case Study No. 2, the *Staff Handbook* for the Caringbah Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Holiday Adventures Program stated:

*You are doing a good job when ... your children are always hanging on you, holding your hand, or asking for piggyback rides.*

When organisational cultures support behaviours associated with grooming, it undermines the ability of even vigilant organisational participants to identify perpetrators of child sexual abuse because their grooming behaviour appears normal (that is, conforming with expectations). When perpetrators are at reduced risk of detection, they are more inclined to abuse the children in their workplace setting (Auriol & Brilon, 2014). For example, as indicated above, the cultures of some childcare organisations may assume that behaviours such as placing children on the laps of staff are necessary. Further, the cultures of some childcare organisations may assume that behaviours like hugging and kissing children are desirable. When this is the case, it may be difficult for managers and staff to discern whether a staff member is engaged in grooming behaviours or in benign or even desirable behaviours.

This appears to have been true in the case of Jonathan Lord, who was convicted of sexually assaulting 12 children at the Caringbah OSHC facility. One of Lord’s co-workers is quoted in Case Study No. 2 as testifying that she saw Lord engaging in behaviour that many would consider indicative of grooming. But she did not report it because she did not perceive it to be inappropriate in the OSHC context. Ms Delleca testified:

*On reflection, John did sometimes have children on his lap. At the time I didn’t think it was suspicious by itself, but I did think that it wasn’t a good look, as it made it look to the other children that he had favourites.*

Another co-worker, Ms Danielle Ockwell, testified that she saw a child on Lord's lap for most of the afternoon but did not tell anyone. As reported in Case Study No. 2:

*She understood that there should not be unnecessary touching between staff and children, but she did not consider that children sitting on laps constituted unnecessary or inappropriate touching.*

Further, when organisational cultures support behaviours that can be used to groom children, it may increase the chance that people who are not aware of their sexual interest in children will, through engaging in those behaviours, discover their latent sexual interest in children. It may also increase the likelihood that people who are not predisposed to develop sexual relationships with children will, through engaging in those behaviours, develop an abusive sexual relationship with a child. For example, a teacher who becomes aware of a student's precarious home situation may give the student special assistance at school (for example, extra tutoring) and outside of school (for example, money for books and extracurricular activities). This can develop into a personal relationship in which the pair interact as equals and the teacher may find they are on a process of progressive and incremental boundary violations, heading towards developing a sexual relationship with the student that is by definition abusive.

### **5.3.3 Sexualised organisational cultures**

Organisational cultures can endorse behaviours that have sexual connotations and can delineate circumstances in which such behaviours are considered acceptable. Behaviours that have sexual connotations include using sexualised and gender-stereotyped language; watching pornography; and consuming or producing media, including advertising and music videos, that sexualises women and girls. Some scholars and policymakers refer to behaviours with sexual connotations as 'sexualised behaviours' and cultures that support such behaviours as 'sexualised' or 'pornified' (Papadopoulos, 2010; Paasonen, 2007; Rush, 2006).

Some contend that sexualised cultures are linked with the development of sexually abusive behaviour by children and young people (Parkin & Green, 1997; Wurtele, 2012; Timmerman & Schreuder 2014; McKibbin, Humphreys & Hamilton, 2015; Wright, 2016). It may be that organisations with sexualised cultures create an environment in which sexually abusive behaviour by children and young people against peers is enabled and encouraged. If children and young people are living in an environment in which they have access to pornography, or in which sexualised images of women and girls are displayed, then these cultural conditions may trigger the development of sexually abusive behaviour (Pratt & Miller, 2012; Timmerman & Schreuder, 2014).

It is also established in the evidence base that sexualised cultures are a risk factor for the perpetration of child sexual abuse by adults in organisational settings (Quadara, 2015). Adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse may create sexualised cultures as part of their grooming of potential victims (Conte, Wolf & Smith, 1989; Colten et al., 2010; Moulden et al., 2010). For example, a perpetrator may intentionally expose children and young people to pornographic material to gauge whether they react with interest or disgust or in some other way. The perpetrator may then decide whether to continue grooming a particular child or young person on the basis of their reaction to the pornography.

Finally, it is worth noting that the cultures of organisations that provide services to very young children can also be sexualised. Lindblad and Kaidel (2005), citing Lindblad et al. (1994), note that sexual exploration games (such as 'doctor'), and the use of sexual words and overt reactions to hearing such words (for example, giggling) are common in day care settings. When the cultures of such organisations are sexualised in this way, perpetrators likely find it easier to engage in abuse and third parties likely find it more difficult to discern inappropriate from appropriate adult–child contact.

#### **5.4 Cultures that do not support the discussion of matters relating to sex**

Ethnographic studies of organisations that deliver services to children and young people reveal that staff members tend to feel ambivalent and uneasy about discussing matters relating to sex, including child sexual abuse. In addition, they usually lack the training and resources needed to discuss such matters (Parkin & Green, 1997; Green, 2001; Timmerman et al., 2012; Timmerman & Schreuder, 2014). Organisational cultures may exacerbate this situation by failing to endorse the non-abusive discussion of sex-related issues, and in extreme cases, designating the discussion of sex-related matters as taboo. When this happens, perpetrators may lack an understanding about appropriate sexual behaviour and how to manage sexual arousal appropriately. Likewise, under these cultural conditions, children and young people may not receive appropriate sexuality education, and may not understand the rules relating to sex. This lack of knowledge may make them more vulnerable because they may not be able to identify when a perpetrator is grooming them.

Keenan (2012) contends that the Catholic Church's tendency to eschew and even discourage the discussion of sex-related matters may have facilitated the child sexual abuse perpetrated by priests. Priests who were not given the opportunity to discuss sex-related matters may have been at a loss when navigating their commitment to celibacy, which likely runs counter to their biologically rooted and socially conditioned sexual urges. Further, Catholic children who were not given the opportunity to discuss sex-related matters may have been at a loss when it came to interpreting the grooming behaviour of priests who failed to navigate their commitment to celibacy.

Organisational cultures that fail to endorse or deter the discussion of sex and sexuality may also slow the detection of abuse and impede responses when it is detected. Signs of abuse, especially grooming, are frequently ambiguous. When organisational cultures endorse the discussion of sex-related matters, witnesses of ambiguous signs of abuse and grooming can consult with superiors, peers and subordinates to evaluate their perceptions. But when organisational cultures fail to endorse discussions of sex-related matters or even label such discussions as taboo, people who witness ambiguous signals are likely to keep their thoughts to themselves. This argument has been advanced in connection with child sexual abuse perpetrated in sports clubs (Parent & Bannon, 2012).

Further, when organisational cultures fail to endorse or they deter the discussion of sex-related matters, victims of child sexual abuse may be more reluctant to report their experience because they do not have the language to describe it. Several survivors who were abused at Winlaton provided testimony suggesting that they were given little information about sex and sexuality. For example, survivor BDF testified that when she started menstruating, she 'did not know who to see about sanitary care' (Case Study No. 30. Submissions Counsel Assisting, 66). In addition, survivor BHE testified that every time she was sent back to Winlaton after running away, she was subjected to sexually transmitted disease examinations, but 'was never told why she had to undergo these checks' (Case Study No. 30. Submissions Counsel Assisting, 62). Thus, it is no surprise that some of the Winlaton women survivors testified that they had difficulty understanding the child sexual abuse perpetrated against them, and had trouble conveying information about the abuse to others. For example, BHE testified that the abuse she experienced, which was perpetrated by a social worker, left her feeling 'confused' (Case Study No. 30, Submissions Counsel Assisting, 62). Another survivor, BDC, testified that she did not recall reporting the sexually abusive behaviour carried out against her by other children and young people because she 'didn't know what to say or how to say it' (Case Study No. 30, Submissions Counsel Assisting, 62).

## **5.5 Cultural attitudes towards childhood and children**

As noted in section 3.2.3, societal cultures feature assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms about children and childhood that are distinct from those about adults and adulthood. For example, in many societal cultures, children are assumed to be incapable of acting in their own best interest, unquestioned deference to adults is valued and children are expected to 'speak only when spoken to'. However, organisational cultures vary in the extent to which they exhibit these and other assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms relating to children and childhood. At least two cultural orientations regarding children and childhood likely play a role in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts.

First, organisational cultures vary in the extent to which they support the assumption that children are trustworthy reporters of their experience. Children and young people with

disabilities may be less capable than other children and young people of offering accurate accounts of their experience. Further, young people who have had contact with the youth justice system may be less inclined than other young people to offer an accurate account of their experience. Such variation likely influences the probability that staff in organisations that deliver services to children and young people believe children who report abuse. In turn, this probably affects the likelihood that children will report the abuse they experience or observe. When the cultures of organisations support the assumption that children are untrustworthy, staff members will be less likely to believe victims who report child sexual abuse. Further, children and young people will be less likely to come forward to disclose abuse they experience or observe because they doubt they will be believed. This dynamic has been observed in schools, where the denials of teachers who have sexually abused children are more likely to be believed than the disclosures of students who have been abused (Robins, 2001; Shakeshaft, 2004; Shakeshaft & Cohen, 1994). This appears to have been true in the case of the abuse at Parramatta and Hay.<sup>18</sup>

Second, organisational cultures vary in the extent to which they support the norm that children should enjoy unrestricted opportunities to speak with their peers and superiors, especially about matters that might cast their superiors in a negative light. It may be that some of the variance in organisational cultures with respect to the voices of children and young people is rooted in functional necessity. For example, the cultures of youth justice centres may be less supportive of children's freedom of self-expression than the cultures of boarding schools, because children's self-expression may be more disruptive to the social order of youth justice centres than it is to the social order of boarding schools. However, functional necessity probably does not account for all the variation across organisational cultures in this regard. For example, the cultures of some boarding schools may be more supportive than others of children's freedom of self-expression, simply because their headmasters embrace a more progressive philosophy of child development.

Regardless of what causes variation in the degree to which organisational cultures support freedom of self-expression, such variation may influence the likelihood that victims of abuse will disclose their abuse. When the cultures of organisations delivering services to children and young people do not support the norm that children should speak freely to their peers and superiors, especially about matters that might cast superiors in a negative light, victims or third-party witnesses of child sexual abuse may be less likely to disclose the abuse. This dynamic appears to have inhibited, and in some instances actively suppressed, the impetus

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<sup>18</sup> Children may be reluctant to report abuse when they expect their reports will not be believed. This is not just because it is unpleasant to be doubted, but because they have little to gain from reporting the abuse and much to lose. When they report abuse, children expose themselves to the risk of a variety of negative consequences (for example, retaliation by the abuser and their allies, and rejection by one's peers).

to disclose sexual abuse at Hay, where girls were required to look down at the ground and were prohibited from speaking to peers while marching around the grounds.

## **5.6 The culture of senior management**

Senior managers, in addition to being tasked with ensuring that their organisation's internal operations function efficiently and effectively, are charged with ensuring that their organisation's relationships with external stakeholders are harmonious (Pfeffer, 1976). Arguably most important, senior managers are expected to ensure that their organisation is insulated from external threats such as adverse publicity and legal action. In the case of private sector enterprises, leaders are legally required to pursue this mandate in the interests of shareholders and are disciplined by boards of directors if they fail to do so. In the case of non-profit organisations, leaders answer to a variety of constituencies that might expect them to pursue this mandate, including organisational participants, alumni, governing boards, financial supporters and funding bodies. Leaders who undergo professional training, such as advanced degrees in business, public and non-profit administration, often learn skills to manage negative publicity and legal challenges. Thus, it is likely that leaders are immersed in cultures that prioritise protecting the organisation's public image and reducing its exposure to legal challenges, even at the expense of protecting the interests of workers, clients and other organisational stakeholders.

Organisations that deliver services to children and young people can experience severe negative consequences from disclosures of child sexual abuse. The prosperity and survival of such organisations hinge on their reputation as safe and nurturing environments for children. High-profile cases of child sexual abuse undermine that reputation.<sup>19</sup> Further, organisations that deliver services to children and young people may be lean organisations with few resources in reserve. As a result, even small legal judgments against them can jeopardise their survival. Thus, while it may seem reprehensible, it should come as no surprise that organisational leaders tend to manage the response to disclosures of child sexual abuse in such a way as to minimise scandal and adverse legal consequences, even though this often results in poor responses to the abuse. Further, in large organisations that can afford to keep crisis management professionals on staff, or that can afford to hire such professionals when child sexual abuse occurs, this tendency might be accentuated. These

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<sup>19</sup> The impact of accusations of child sexual abuse on the reputation of an organisation that delivers services to children and young people is diminished to the extent that its performance is clearly measurable. Thus, schools that are judged by their students' performance on standardised tests, and sports clubs that are judged by their athletes' performance in competition, are better able to attempt to diminish the negative publicity that claims of child sexual abuse can generate.

people, such as lawyers, are professionally bound to defend clients against claims such as child sexual abuse and questions of whether the organisation is responsible, even when they may know their client is guilty.

## **5.7 Power structures**

In virtually all instances of child sexual abuse, perpetrators possess more power than their victims.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that some believe that variation in the power structures of organisations that deliver services to children and young people influence the perpetration, detection and response to child sexual abuse in these institutions (Timmerman & Schreuder, 2014; Coates, 1997; Green, 2001). Section 4.5 considered the role that formal power can play in the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in total institutions. This section considers the role that formal and informal power can play in child sexual abuse in organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type.<sup>21</sup>

### **5.7.1 Formal power**

Formal power – also referred to as ‘hierarchical power’ or ‘authority’ and discussed above in relation to total institutions – is rooted in the organisation’s chain of command (Mechanic, 1962; Palmer, 2012). Generally speaking, the higher one is in the chain of command, the more formal power or authority a person has over those below them in the organisation’s hierarchy. Those who have written about the role that power plays in institutional child sexual abuse tend to focus on formal power; specifically, abuse perpetrated by people occupying positions of formal authority (for example, detention facility staff or teachers) against children who are subject to their authority (for example, wards of the state or students).

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<sup>20</sup> The role that power plays in child sexual abuse varies across instances of abuse. In some cases, power *might* play a minor role, such as when older adolescents abuse younger ones in so-called ‘Romeo and Juliet’ relationships.

<sup>21</sup> A number of frameworks for conceptualising power have been advanced over the years. Most have their roots in a schema developed by French and Raven (1959), which distinguishes between six types of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, referent and information power. Mechanic (1962) and Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) modified this schema for the purpose of analysing power in organisations. The Mechanic framework groups five of French and Raven’s different types of power into two broad classes of power: formal power (which combines legitimate and coercive power) and informal power (which incorporates reward, expert and information power). This organisational-specific framework implicitly considers referent power to be a form of social influence. Palmer (2012: 177) uses the Mechanic typology, which distinguishes between formal and informal power, for his analysis of the role that power plays in misconduct in and by organisations. This is the approach to categorising types of power that is used in this report.



Formal power differentials between potential perpetrators and victims can provide the *opportunity* for people to abuse others over whom they possess power. The role that formal power differentials can play in the perpetration of child sexual abuse was explicated above in relation to total institutions such as Winlaton, where social workers were able to perpetrate sexual abuse against girls in their care partly because they could order girls to meet them in locked, windowless rooms. However, formal power differentials can also play a role in the perpetration of sexual abuse in organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type, where power differentials are less extreme. For example, Cense and Brackenridge (2001) report that the subordinate position of victims of child sexual abuse in sporting organisations in relation to their coaches makes it difficult for them 'to challenge or resist the [abusive] behaviour of their seniors' (68). Hence, Stephen Roser was likely able to sexually abuse swimmers during practice at the Scone Swimming Club, the subject of Case Study No. 15, partly because he occupied a position of authority as head coach and the athletes under his charge felt obliged to follow his orders. Specifically, when Rosen instructed survivor AEB to float stomach down in the water in front of him and to wrap her thighs around his hips and stroke with her arms without using her legs, she complied. And when he proceeded to perpetrate penetrative sexual abuse against her, AEB did not demonstrate overt resistance.

Further, formal power differentials also give people with power the *motivation* to abuse others who do not have it. The possession and use of power alters the way people perceive themselves and others such that they see themselves as morally superior and others as morally inferior. This cognitive orientation motivates them to treat others unethically in general, and to behave sexually aggressively towards others more specifically (Lee-Chai, Chen & Chartrand, 2001). It is exceedingly difficult, for methodological reasons, to assess the cognitive orientations and motivational states of those who perpetrate abuse in the field. But it seems possible that some of the managers and staff described in the Royal Commission case studies reviewed for this report perpetrated sexual abuse against children in their care because they perceived themselves to be morally superior and their victims to be morally inferior.

Formal power differentials in organisations can also make it costly for victims to disclose their abuse, which may deter them from doing so. When victims report sexual abuse perpetrated against them by people with formal power over them, they are subjected to the possibility that the perpetrators and their allies will seek retribution. The role that formal power differentials can play in victims' disclosure of child sexual abuse was explicated above in relation to total institutions such as Turana, Winlaton and Baltara. Here, survivors testified that they declined to report the abuse perpetrated against them by staff members because they feared that the perpetrators and their colleagues would subject them to institutional punishments like solitary confinement. But formal power differentials can also play a role in suppressing victim reports of sexual abuse in organisations that do not

conform to the total institution ideal type, where the differentials are less extreme. For example, Cense and Brackenridge (2001) report that the victims of child sexual abuse in sporting organisations they studied did not report the abuse partly out of fear of 'losing their place in the sport' (70). Hence, it seems possible that some victims who were students at Geelong Grammar School, and some who were members of swimming clubs affiliated with Swimming Australia, may have decided not to report abuse because they feared that the people to whom they would report might punish them for doing so. This punishment may include denying them educational or sporting opportunities; thus, it would block their aspirations. Indeed, survivor BKV testified in Case Study No. 32 that he did not report the sexual abuse perpetrated against him by a Geelong Grammar School teacher while he was a student at the school because 'he did not feel that he would be safe if he reported the abuse' (10). Indeed, when survivor BKO reported to Geelong Grammar School teacher Jonathan Harvey the sexual abuse perpetrated against him by Reverend John Davison -- he 'found the subsequent process very threatening and ... was told that he may be expelled' (Case Study No. 32: 10).

Formal power differentials can also make it more costly for third parties to report abuse they witness. Staff members who discover that their superiors are engaged in abuse may be reluctant to report it out of fear that their superiors will rebuff the report, retain their positions of authority and punish them, such as by impeding the staff member's advancement in the organisation (Green, 2001). For the same reason, staff members who discover that their peers or subordinates are engaged in abuse may also be reluctant to report it if they believe the perpetrators enjoy a favoured personal relationship (for example, friendship or kinship) with their superiors. In extreme cases, the use of formal power in this way (that is, to intimidate subordinates from reporting abuse) may become normative, in which case the organisation can be said to exhibit a 'culture of fear' (Green, 2001).

The role that formal power differentials can play in third-party reporting of child sexual abuse was explicated above in relation to total institutions such as Winlaton, where staff members told girls who reported sexual abuse perpetrated by male senior officers that there was nothing they could do about it. The impact of formal power differentials on third-party reporting of child sexual abuse in total institutions is also evident in recent reports that American soldiers were ordered to ignore child sexual abuse they witnessed at the hands of Afghan police and army troops. Sexual abuse is prevalent in Afghan society. In particular, it is common for powerful men to sexually abuse young boys in a practice referred to as 'bacha bazi', which translates as 'boy play'. Several American soldiers observed Afghan military officers who had abducted and imprisoned young boys to sexually abuse them and reported the situation to their superiors. Their superiors ordered the soldiers to ignore these arrangements. While some soldiers followed these orders, others persisted in speaking out against the abusive relationships. They risked damage to their

military careers as a result (Gibbons-Neff, 2015). Indeed, one soldier contends that he was disciplined and received career-ending punishments after he disobeyed orders to 'look the other way' (Goldstein, 2015).

However, formal power differentials can also play a role in suppressing third-party reporting of child sexual abuse in organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type, where power differentials are less extreme. Third-party observers may decline reporting child abuse perpetrated by superiors because they fear explicit retribution for doing so. For example, a Geelong Grammar School student who reported abuse perpetrated by a staff member was instructed to remain silent; when he told a fellow student about the abuse, he was expelled (Case Study No. 32: 14). Similarly, one of Jonathan Lord's subordinates, Ms Nobel, refrained from reporting her suspicions that he was sexually abusing children at the Caringbah OSHC facility, partly because she feared negative consequences for casting suspicion on a superior. As Ms Nobel testified in Case Study No. 2:

*If I wanted to make a complaint about a supervisor, I would have access to Jacqui [Jonathon Lord's superior], but I do not think that I would feel comfortable with making a complaint about a supervisor.*

Third-party observers may decline reporting child sexual abuse to superiors simply because they believe that their superiors will not take their concerns seriously. When third-party observers raise concerns about a superior, peer, or subordinate and these concerns are not taken seriously, the reporting individual exposes him/herself to recrimination from others including the suspected abuser. As reported in Case Study No. 2, which analyses sexual abuse that took place at the Caringbah OSHC facility, Ms Danielle Ockwell testified that she did not feel comfortable raising concerns about co-worker Jonathan Lord with her manager, Jacqui Barnat, because 'I didn't trust her and I was worried that if I raised an issue with her she wouldn't take it further'.

Victims who are abused by superiors, and third parties who witness abuse perpetrated by superiors or those with special relationships with their superiors, will be particularly reluctant to report abuse and press for an effective response when their organisation's hierarchy is unitary; that is, when subordinates have a single superior, rather than multiple superiors (Sprober et al., 2014). In such cases, subordinates do not have alternative authorities to whom they can report a superior's abuse or failure to respond effectively to another's abuse. The difficulties of reporting child sexual abuse and pressing for an effective response in an organisation with a unitary hierarchy peak in small organisations led by a single manager. For example, Stephen Roser was the only coach at the Scone Swimming Club when he abused AEB and possibly other young swimmers. Thus, AEB and the other swimmers who might have been abused had no one else in authority to whom they could report the abuse.

Formal authority always rests on some basis of legitimacy. According to the sociologist Max Weber (1976), a formal authority's basis of legitimacy can be rooted in one of three logics: rational legal criteria (that is, competency or ownership), traditional beliefs or charisma. Rational legal criteria, which provide the dominant underpinning of legitimacy in private sector organisations, are the most behaviourally restrictive. Typically, private sector managers can only legitimately order their employees to engage in work-related actions. Traditional and charismatic logics, which provide the dominant underpinning of legitimacy in spiritual organisations, are the least behaviourally restrictive. The religious legitimacy of priests, rabbis and swamis allow them to instruct their followers to do things that extend into many spheres of life (such as work, family and interpersonal relationships). For example, the charismatic legitimacy enjoyed by well-known successful sports coaches allows them to order their athletes to engage in a wide range of behaviours, including those relating to diet, bedtime, waking up time and interpersonal relationships. *All things being equal*, the more a person's legitimacy is rooted in traditional and/or charismatic logics, the more they will be able to sexually abuse children in their care (Timmerman & Schreuder, 2014; Coates, 1997; Green, 2001). In all likelihood, the traditional and charismatic authority enjoyed by Nestor enhanced his opportunity to sexually abuse children in the Wollongong Catholic Diocese. It also likely enhanced the opportunity of Terrance Buck and Scott Volkers to abuse the young athletes they coached in clubs affiliated with Swimming Australia.

Finally, as indicated in section 4.5, formal authority primarily operates through the norm of obedience to authority. Virtually all societies and all organisations possess cultures that exhibit the norm of obedience to authority. But the strength of that norm varies across societies and in different contexts, including different organisational contexts. For example, total institutions such as military organisations typically exhibit strong norms of obedience, whereas organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type, such as sports clubs, typically exhibit weak norms of obedience. This norm appears to be relatively strong in all the institutions examined for this report, although undoubtedly it was stronger in quintessential total institutions such as Parramatta and Hay (where children and young people were expected to conform without question to staff commands in many behavioural domains) than in the clubs affiliated with Swimming Australia (where athletes presumably were allowed to contradict instructions issued by coaches in many behavioural domains). Further, within the broad category of organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type, some organisations exhibit stronger norms of obedience than others. In general, the stronger the norm of obedience, the more motivation and opportunities staff will have to sexually abuse children in their charge.

### **5.7.2 Informal power**

*Informal power* is rooted in an organisation's distribution of resources, where anything upon which others depend (whether it is tangible, such as money, or intangible, such as expertise)

constitutes a resource. Generally, the more important and scarce resources one possesses, the more informal power a person will enjoy over others who depend on those resources. Those who write about the role that informal power plays in child sexual abuse tend to focus on sexually abusive behaviour carried out by other children and young people; specifically, instances in which a child who possesses informal power abuses another child who lacks it. Age is often associated with informal power in peer groups in organisations that deliver services to children and young people. This is because age correlates with knowledge about the institution, allies in the institution and physical strength, all of which are key resources in such organisations. Thus, it may be that sexually abusive behaviour in such circumstances typically involves older children abusing younger ones.

Like formal power differentials, informal power differentials between potential perpetrators and victims can give individuals the *opportunity* to abuse others over whom they have power. This is evident in total institutions such as Winlaton, where girls were able to sexually abuse other girls partly because they were stronger and had allies who could help them physically restrain victims. The role that informal power differentials play in the perpetration of sexual abuse is also evident in organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type, where power differentials are less extreme. Survivor AEA might have submitted to and not disclosed the abuse that Buck perpetrated against him while the two were teammates at the Clovelly Surf Lifesaving Club, which was a focus of Case Study No. 15, because Buck was older; thus, he possessed more informal power.

Further, research suggests that informal power differentials, like formal power differentials, can give people who possess power the *motivation* to abuse those who do not. The possession and use of informal power can alter the way people perceive themselves and others, increasing their likelihood of treating others unethically in general, and being sexually aggressive towards others, more specifically (Lee-Chai, Chen & Chartrand, 2001). Thus, the greater the informal power differentials between potential perpetrators and victims in institutions, the more likely abuse will occur.

Like formal power differentials, informal power differentials can also make it difficult for victims to report sexual abuse, deterring them from doing so. When victims report abuse perpetrated by people with informal power over them, they subject themselves to the possibility that the perpetrators and their allies will seek retribution. This is evident in total institutions such as Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, where the survivors of sexually abusive behaviour perpetrated by other children and young people said they did not report the abuse because they feared that the abusers and their friends would physically punish them. The role that informal power differentials play in suppressing victims' reporting of sexual abuse is also evident in organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type, where power differentials are less extreme.

For example, in Case Study No. 15, survivor AEA testified that he still did not disclose the abuse Buck perpetrated against him years later, when both he and Buck were coaches, because Buck enjoyed an exalted 'status as an Olympian and an Australian sporting icon' (Case Study 15: 151). It seems reasonable to interpret this explanation as indicating that AEA did not report the abuse while he was a coach partly because Buck enjoyed considerable informal power in the sport of swimming, including in the sport's peak organisations, such as Swimming Australia. As a former Olympian and famous sporting personality, he possessed resources that organisations and leading figures in the sport needed. Buck's fame attracted young athletes, spectators and financial support to the sport and its organisations.

Informal power differentials, like formal power differentials, can also make it more costly for third parties to report the abuse they witness. Staff discovering that their superiors, peers or subordinates are engaged in abuse may be reluctant to come forward if they believe that perpetrators possess power in the form of scarce and important expertise. This may be another reason why co-workers of Lord did not report to superiors their suspicions that he was engaging in behaviour that might constitute child sexual abuse at Caringbah OSHC facility. Although hired as a part-time casual worker, he advanced to the position of full-time coordinator. As such, he had longer tenure and more experience in the facility, likely giving him more informal power than his assistants. Ms Bates, a childcare assistant who observed Lord engaging in behaviour that she suspected might constitute child sexual abuse, was reluctant to report her suspicions. Her explanation suggests she was influenced by Lord's informal power. As reported on page 63 of Case Study No. 2, Ms Bates said:

*... once felt uncomfortable, as she observed physical interaction between Lord and a child which she considered involved unnecessary touching. She knew that unnecessary touching was wrong but she did not tell anyone about the incident. She assumed that Lord 'was a more senior person because of his attitude' and she 'just didn't feel like I was in a place to say anything'.*

Finally, informal power differentials can also reduce the likelihood that reports of sexual abuse will produce effective organisational responses. If those suspected of perpetrating child sexual abuse possess informal power through their control of valued and scarce resources, others in the organisation will be reluctant to pursue a case against them. In addition, those others will defend them against individuals who do pursue a case against them. For example, the superiors who ordered American soldiers to ignore child sexual abuse perpetrated by the Afghan police and army likely issued those orders because the Afghan police and army controlled important resources upon which the United States military depended, giving them substantial informal power over the military. Specifically, the Afghan police and army controlled the extent to which American soldiers could operate safely and effectively in Afghanistan (Gibbons-Neff, 2015; Goldstein, 2015). Similarly, the

managers of sporting clubs and even the parents of members may be reluctant to pursue an investigation and criminal charges against coaches alleged to have perpetrated sexual abuse when the coaches are successful, because they possess resources (for example, coaching skills) that the managers and parents consider to be important and scarce (Parent & Bannon, 2012; Brackenridge, 1994, 1997). Several of the survivors testifying in Case Study No. 15 about the abuse Volkert perpetrated on them when they were young swimmers indicated they did not report it because they believed senior club officials would do nothing because Volkert was believed to possess unique talents as a swimming trainer. This belief about an ineffective response appears to have been borne out by subsequent events.

An organisation's informal power structure can be shaped in a variety of ways by its culture. This is conceptualised as the assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms permeating the organisation. Perhaps most importantly, an organisation's culture can influence perceptions about the importance and scarcity of resources that participants possess, and the power they enjoy. This is apparent in sports organisations that differ in the extent to which their cultures value the development of children as athletes (for example, those that value children as a means to achieve victories), as opposed to the development of children as people (for example, those that value children as ends in themselves). In clubs with cultures that prioritise children's athletic performance over their general welfare, athletes (and their parents) will perceive coaches as possessing scarce and important resources (that is, the skills and knowledge needed to succeed) when they compete successfully. Coaches who enjoy this perception will be in a better position to sexually abuse young athletes, because the athletes and their parents will be more vulnerable to the grooming behaviours of the perpetrator, and less likely to report and respond to abuse.

Finally, in some cases, the formal power possessed by staff and the informal power enjoyed by children and young people operate in tandem in organisations that deliver services to children and young people. For example, Parkin and Green (1997) report that in the small residential facility for young people that they studied, staff members sometimes authorised young people who were recognised as possessing informal power to serve as staff surrogates while they took breaks. In such cases, the staff member's delegated formal authority supplements children's 'top dog' informal power.

### **5.7.3 Power and social status**

Status or prestige refers to the degree to which members of a person's milieu hold them in high regard. People can possess status by virtue of ascription; that is, by being born into a group that enjoys high prestige, such as a wealthy family. People can also possess status by virtue of achievement; that is, by acquiring traits that are valued, such as by developing virtuoso talent on a musical instrument (Weber, 1946). Power and status have similar effects on those who lack it, but operate through different mechanisms. Power elicits

compliance in others, while status elicits deference. Further, power and status are often intertwined in organisations. The more formal authority and informal power people possess in an organisation, the more social status or prestige they tend to enjoy. Thus many of the arguments offered above in relation to the role that power plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts apply to status as well.

But analytically speaking, power and status are distinct in at least two ways. First, it is possible for a person to enjoy considerable status in an organisation without simultaneously possessing much power, as is the case with a celebrated teacher in a school. Second, status elicits trust from others, whereas power does not. Greater social status is equated with being considered more trustworthy. As a result, status differentials make it less likely that perpetrators will be suspected of abuse and identified as abusers. Further, status differentials make it less likely that victims who report their abuse will be believed. And freedom from suspicion and insulation from allegations may create opportunities that increase the likelihood that high-status individuals will abuse children. Hence, perpetrators of sexual abuse are often highly respected top performers in their organisation (Boyle, 2014). Thus, survivor AEA declined to report the abuse he experienced at the hands of Buck because, as described in Case Study No. 15, Buck enjoyed higher status in the swimming arena than he did, and would likely garner more support than him.

#### **5.7.4 Power and status degradation ceremonies**

Sociologists have identified a type of quasi-scripted social interaction in which high-status individuals reaffirm their superiority relative to low-status individuals. In these 'status degradation ceremonies', one person or group of people causes another person or group of people to behave in ways that lead the latter to conclude they are inferior in terms of their competence, intelligence, moral integrity or any other status criteria (Garfinkle, 1946). In one type of status degradation ceremony, referred to as a 'power ritual', one person or group of people causes another person or group of people to behave in ways that lead the latter to conclude they have less power (Moch & Huff 1983). Some instances of child sexual abuse may represent power rituals. Specifically, some perpetrators of child sexual abuse (whether the abusers are adults, children or young people) may initiate the abuse to assert and affirm their power over the victims, rather than to obtain sexual gratification.

Some instances of child-to-child abuse at Geelong Grammar School, as recounted by Robert Llewellyn-Jones in Case Study No. 32, appear to constitute power rituals. Instances in which groups of boys forcibly restrained other boys to rub their genitals with shoe polish or insert objects into their rectums were unlikely to have been orchestrated for sexual gratification. More likely, they were carried out to affirm the informal power of the perpetrators over the abused boys; that is, to solidify their position as 'top dogs' and provoke a sense of powerlessness in victims (McKenzie-Murray, 2014, Coldrey, 2001). At least some instances



of child sexual abuse that staff members perpetrated against children and young people at Turana, Winlaton, Baltara, Parramatta and Hay may have constituted power rituals.

Organisational cultures vary in the extent to which status degradation ceremonies are considered appropriate or acceptable. Almost all educational institutions endorse mild status degradation ceremonies; for example, when teachers ask students questions to which they could not possibly know the answer and then reveal the answer, impressing upon students their subordinate status in the organisation. The culture at Geelong Grammar School appeared to be somewhat unique in that it endorsed, or at least tolerated, severe forms of power rituals. Llewellyn-Jones testified that teachers encouraged or tolerated students bullying peers with counter-normative traits (such as ineptitude in sports). These teachers referred to such bullying as benign 'mocking' (McKenzie-Murray, 2014).

#### **5.7.5 Power structures as a determinant of organisational culture**

In organisations where the power structure facilitates the perpetration of child sexual abuse, slows its detection and impedes an effective response, organisational victims and third parties may perceive reporting abuse and lobbying authorities to respond as futile. When this perception persists over time, the reluctance to report abuse and push for an effective response can become part of the organisation's culture. Specifically, victims may come to consider acquiescence to abuse and third-party observers may consider silence and even complicity with others' abuse to be normative; that is, appropriate and expected, although, perhaps regrettable.

#### **5.8 Culture and informal group dynamics**

Section 4.6 considered the role that informal group dynamics can play in the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it in total institutions. This section considers the role that informal group dynamics can play in child sexual abuse in organisations that do not conform to the total institution ideal type.

The managers and staff of organisations that deliver services to children and young people are sometimes reluctant to disclose or respond to suspicions of child sexual abuse when their organisation does not support discussing subjects that call the behaviour of co-workers into question. They may even treat the discussion of such subjects as taboo (English, Heil & Dumond, 2010, Wurtele, 2012; Boyle, 2014). Reluctance to cast suspicion on, or address allegations against, superiors, peers and subordinates is particularly great in organisations that resemble cohesive groups. In these settings, co-workers may view even tentative criticisms of co-workers as divisive (that is, undermining group cohesion and subsequent coordination). For example, the administrators of sports clubs report reluctance to address complaints about child sexual abuse because doing so requires them to choose between defending the accused coaches and supporting the abused athletes (Parent, 2011).

Reluctance to voice or address concerns about the appropriateness of a co-worker's conduct is rooted in very practical concerns about the need to maintain cordial relationships with one's co-workers (Wonnacott, 2013). For example, if a staff member raises suspicions about a co-worker and the suspicions are determined to be invalid, it can become difficult for the staff member to remain in the work environment. This concern was voiced by a co-worker of Lord. As Ms Noble testified in Case Study No. 2:

*I would feel uncomfortable making a complaint, because although it is really good that we have lots of friendships with the team, things always seem to get back to people even if they are not meant to.*

Reluctance to cast suspicion on, or address allegations against, superiors, peers or subordinates is often associated with the impulse to trust one's co-workers. The impulse to trust superiors, peers or subordinates tends to be greater in organisations where participants share a common professional or religious affiliation and approach one another as colleagues. The contradiction between a staff member's impulse to trust professional colleagues and their obligation to protect the children in their care is evident in a draft letter prepared by Mr Lewis, Geelong Grammar School principal, and intended for delivery to Harvey. It said:

*A real problem for your continuing work in the school ... is that barriers of distrust have grown up between you and a good number of your senior colleagues. Without wishing to find members in that sort of situation several house masters for instance (not just from the current group) have found themselves in situations where they are torn between the trust which they would like to exhibit in a colleague and their responsibility. Their concern is over relationships with some pupils which [sic] they do not believe to be in the best interests of those pupils ... it is also the case that some of your colleagues believe themselves to have ... information about activities outside the school which [sic] they find distressing (Case Study No. 32: 17).<sup>22</sup>*

In some cases, the obligation to trust one's colleagues is embedded in organisational structures. As indicated above, the Catholic Church maintains an elaborate organisational apparatus for investigating and adjudicating complaints against priests. One element of this organisational apparatus is an administrative body known as the Congregation for the Clergy (CFC), which is staffed by priests and adjudicates appeals filed by priests who have been accused of misconduct. The members of the CFC are known to favour fellow priests and

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<sup>22</sup> The vagueness of the last part of this draft letter illustrates the difficulty that workers in organisations that deliver services to children and young people may have in frankly discussing child sexual abuse.

render biased decisions. Nestor appealed to this body and his appeal was sustained, slowing his expulsion from the priesthood.

## **5.9 Cultural orientations towards rule following**

### **5.9.1 Factors inhibiting the effectiveness of policies and procedures geared to address child sexual abuse**

Theoretically, all of the above-described cultural factors that can facilitate child sexual abuse, slow its detection and impede a response can be effectively counterbalanced by detailed child sexual abuse policies and procedures that are complied with and enforced. However, these policies and procedures resemble those geared to address the possibility of deleterious events in organisations more generally. And it is well recognised that such policies and procedures are subject to failure.

It is often difficult to draw up comprehensive policies and procedures to address the possibility of deleterious events because it is difficult to anticipate all situations that might give rise to such events, and to identify effective behavioural responses in advance. The testimony and conclusions reached in Case Study No. 9 regarding sexual abuse committed by Brian Perkins at St Ann's Special School illustrate some of the limitations of policies and procedures geared to address deleterious events. The school lacked policies and procedures relating to how staff provided respite care for students, perhaps because organisational leaders were not aware of the opportunities that respite care provided for staff to abuse children.

Policies and procedures that do not adequately address the possibility of deleterious events are problematic for two reasons. Most obviously, they fail to provide organisational participants with guidance on how to react. Less obviously, they can lead participants to engage in behaviours that increase the likelihood of deleterious events. Participants tend to follow policies and procedures in a mindless fashion, without questioning their merits. Thus, they tend to follow inadequate policies and procedures, even when they lead to behaviours that independent observers (and, after the fact, even they) would consider inefficient, ineffective and morally inadequate.

This appears to have been the case in 1991, when Mr Michael Critchley, the coordinator of resources for the Catholic Education Office (CEO), was told that a St Ann's Special School employee had sexually abused a student. Rather than notify someone at the CEO of the abuse, Mr Critchley responded unilaterally as if it was a human resources management issue. As he testified in 2014, Mr Critchley wished that he had enquired further about the problem and notified the CEO director immediately. Further, he 'could think of no real or perceived barriers that prevented him from taking those steps' (Case Study No. 9: 23). Mr Critchley's failure to adequately respond to the abuse was at least partly because he was

busy doing his job. Indeed, an investigation of the CEO concluded that Mr Critchley 'responded to the allegations of sexual abuse in accordance with his duties and responsibilities in accordance with accepted expectations and procedures relating to reports of child sexual abuse as they existed at the time' (23).

In addition, it is often difficult for participants to faithfully comply with detailed policies and procedures because time, attention and information processing constraints inhibit them from knowing and understanding such policies. Simply put, participants tend to focus on policies and procedures that relate to frequently occurring events; they respond to rare events in an ad hoc fashion. Thus, it is not surprising that several researchers have reported that employees and volunteers at organisations that provide services to children and young people often have incomplete knowledge of the policies and procedures relating to child sexual abuse (Wurtele & Schmitt, 1992). Finally, it is often difficult for organisations to enforce compliance with policies and procedures geared to address the possibility of deleterious events, because the costs of closely monitoring and regulating member behaviour are prohibitive.

This also appears to have been the case at St Ann's Special School, where the principal, Mr Claude Hamam, and acting principal, Mr Martin Aartsen, failed to comply with the policies and procedures relating to child sexual abuse when Perkins's abuse was detected. They testified that they failed to follow official policies and procedures because they were ignorant of them. But they might also have failed to follow them because they believed their ad hoc response would be satisfactory.

The testimony and findings from Case Study No. 9 suggest that Mr Hamam and Mr Aartsen used what might be considered good common sense, and acted in a timely fashion, when Perkins's abuse was detected. Mr Hamam told the head of the school's management board, who was responsible for overseeing operational matters, the same day that he learnt about Perkins's abuse. He also told the head of human resources management at the CEO, who presumably handled problems relating to staff at schools overseen by the agency. Further, Mr Hamam met police and the parents of suspected victims the next day. Because of these actions, a CEO social worker was assigned to visit St Ann's within days to assist the principal with handling the situation. Finally, Mr Aartsen followed up on Mr Hamam's initiatives as seemed appropriate in his absence. Neither of them notified the entire board of management about the abuse, as official policy dictated, because they believed they needed to keep it confidential, in accordance with local law enforcement directives. It is also likely

they didn't notify the board of governors because the school was relatively autonomous from the board.<sup>23</sup>

More relevant to this report, there is growing recognition that cultural factors can undermine faithful compliance and rigorous enforcement of administrative policies and procedures designed to avert deleterious events. This notion was first recognised in the late 1980s in connection with major organisational accidents (most famously, the Chernobyl nuclear reactor fire and meltdown). This notion was formalised at the end of the 20th century in connection with aviation accidents (Meshkati, 1997; Zhang et al. 2002). Since that time, cultural influences have been cited as a causal factor in other accidents, such as coal mine explosions (Berkes, 2011).

Diane Vaughan (1996) explored how cultures that cause organisational participants to disregard policies and procedures designed to avoid deleterious events can arise in her analysis of the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster. Vaughan contends that a variety of pressures can cause participants to deviate in small ways from established safe practice. In the case of the Challenger disaster, there was political pressure to meet tight launch schedules. And when those deviations do not produce significant negative consequences, they become part of standard operating procedures and are viewed as normative. The previously deviant, but now 'normalised', procedures set a new benchmark against which future deviations from established safe policies are evaluated. This means organisational participants can progressively rationalise and become desensitised to their past behaviour. The cultural factors that can undermine compliance with, and enforcement of, policies and procedures designed to inhibit the perpetration of child sexual abuse in institutions are discussed below. This report does not discuss the cultural factors that can undermine compliance with, and enforcement of, policies designed to speed up the detection and enhance the response to child sexual abuse in institutions. This is because they directly parallel those that undermine compliance with and enforcement of policies designed to inhibit the perpetration of child sexual abuse.

### **5.9.2 Cultural orientations towards rule following that might influence the perpetration of child sexual abuse**

The culture of an organisation that delivers services to children and young people can influence the likelihood that people predisposed to sexually abusing children can enter the

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<sup>23</sup> While this departure from standing rules may seem like a dereliction of duty, conforming to norms in contradiction of rules is common in organisations, because standing rules are formulated to take into account the most frequently occurring situations; thus, they often do not provide efficient or effective guidance in unique situations.

organisation. This can occur if cultural elements undermine screening policies and procedures that govern the recruitment of new employees and volunteers. Organisational cultures that undermine policies and procedures for screening prospective staff could develop because of efficiency and effectiveness constraints; specifically, the costs and difficulties associated with finding employees and volunteers. Employee turnover in organisations delivering services to children and young people tends to be high and unpredictable. As a result, such organisations often find themselves searching for new staff on short notice. The fact that staff work for low wages (or no wages in the case of volunteers) makes the search for new staff more problematic. These factors may have led the principal of St Ann's Special School to depart from established policies and procedures in hiring Perkins. He applied for a casual part-time position as a bus driver. He was responsible for transporting students from their homes to school for 90 minutes in the morning, and from school to their homes for 90 minutes in the afternoon. It is possible the principal departed from protocol when hiring Perkins at least partly because he did not think the expenditure of time and money required to conform to protocol was warranted, given the relative insignificance of the position to the school's mission and the short time Perkins would spend with the children.

However, even consummate implementation of good governance practices in employee and volunteer screening is unlikely to eliminate all child sexual abuse in organisations that provide services to children and young people. This is partly because even consummate implementation of good governance screening practices is unlikely to exclude all people with a propensity for child sexual abuse. Many good governance policies screen out prospective employees and volunteers on the basis of their prior history of abuse. But most people who abuse children in organisations that provide services to children and young people do not have a prior record of abuse. One might wish to develop good governance screening policies that take into account more subtle indicators of a prospective employee's or volunteer's propensity to sexually abuse children. But developing such policies may be difficult, in that evidence suggests that the psychological profiles of people who sexually abuse children in organisations are not discernably different from non-abusers' profiles (c.f. Pringle, 1993; Lanning & Dietz, 2014). Matters are made more difficult by the fact that many individuals who sexually abuse children in organisations discover the inclination to do so after joining the organisation (Lanning & Dietz, 2014) and may even develop the inclination in a *crescive* fashion.

Thus, organisations that provide services to children and young people also develop policies relating to behaviours that are considered appropriate. But the culture of an organisation can also influence the likelihood that people who have entered the organisation as employees or volunteers sexually abuse children in their care. It can do this by not following policies and procedures relating to behaviours that constitute child sexual abuse or grooming, or by encouraging behaviours that set staff members on a *crescive* path to abuse.

Organisational cultures that violate policies and procedures that prohibit unacceptable behaviours can develop in response to efficiency and effectiveness constraints; specifically, the costs and difficulties associated with compliance. For example, an organisation could have a policy requiring that children are supervised by more than one staff member at all times. But the organisation's budget might not allow for hiring sufficient staff members to conform to this policy.

An organisation's culture can also support flaunting good governance policies and procedures for screening and prohibiting inappropriate behaviours for staff members from specific demographic groups. For example, in most developed societies, it is assumed that women are less likely than men to sexually abuse children. Thus, in most developed societies, the cultures in which organisations that deliver services to children and young people are embedded may support the violation of screening rules for female applicants and the violation of procedures prohibiting inappropriate behaviour for female staff members. But while the assumption that women are less likely than men to sexually abuse children is valid, it is not true that women never abuse children. Indeed, some researchers have argued that the literature on child sexual abuse has given insufficient attention to female perpetrators and that, as a result, institutions are frequently lax when hiring and monitoring female staff who may be predisposed to engaging in child sexual abuse (Duncan, 2010; Knoll, 2010).

Similarly, in most societies, cultures contain the assumption that people to whom we are related via kinship, friendship or common racial background are more trustworthy and, by extension, less likely to perpetrate child sexual abuse. Thus, societal cultures in which most organisations that deliver services to children and young people are embedded may tend to support the flaunting of rules relating to screening job applicants and prohibiting inappropriate behaviours when candidates and staff members are kin, friends or members of the same race as current staff. This cultural tendency may be rooted in social psychological processes relating to evaluating others who are socially similar to us, and the cognitive dissonance created when evidence that socially similar others are perpetrators comes to light. Because identifying new staff candidates through prescribed channels may not be cost-effective and time efficient, organisations may resort to identifying staff members through leaders' and employees' interpersonal and kinship networks, substituting interpersonal and familial trust for a more formal vetting process.

This appears to have been the case at the Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services outside school hours care (OSHC) facility, which was investigated by the Royal Commission but not provided for analysis in this report. The organisation's chief executive, Steven Larkins, followed common practice in the Aboriginal community by selecting extended family members to serve on the board. He also hired extended family members as staff and

caregivers. Such individuals subsequently provided inadequate monitoring of Larkins, who had child exploitation material on his office computer (Menzies & Stoker, 2015).

This appears to have also been the case when Ms Jacqui Barnat, the Children's Services Manager for the southern region of YMCA NSW, hired Jonathan Lord to work at the Caringbah OSHC facility. As reported in Case Study No. 2, Ms Barnat failed to comply with key features of YMCA NSW's policies on hiring new staff, perhaps because Lord was the son of a former Caringbah OSHC employee and was referred to her by two current YMCA NSW staff members. This recruitment process failed to unearth the fact that Lord was dismissed from his previous post as a YMCA camp counsellor in the United States because of suspected sexual abuse of a young camper. Within two years of his employment, Lord had sexually abused several children at the Caringbah OSHC facility.

Finally, organisational cultures that support the flaunting of good governance policies and procedures for screening and prohibiting inappropriate behaviour can develop because of organisation-specific or subculture-specific negative evaluations of external rule-makers. It is well known that employees of heavily regulated organisations typically develop a negative view of the agencies that regulate them; specifically, that they obstruct the pursuit of their organisation's mission, possibly for self-interested reasons, such as justifying their existence and increasing their budgets (Palmer, 2012). Further, these negative evaluations may promote the development of 'techniques of neutralisation' that authorise participants to deceive agencies about their compliance with directives. In particular, they may promote the development of the 'social weighting' technique of neutralisation. This constitutes a view of the regulating agency as illegitimate and thus unworthy of complete honesty and consummate cooperation. Staff members of organisations that deliver services to children and young people may view government and professional agencies that regulate their organisation as interfering with its smooth functioning; thus, they develop negative evaluations of these regulative bodies. This is especially likely when staff members believe that regulators are associated with demographic groups that have antipathy for their own group.

This effect appears to have been at work at the Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services OSHC. Menzies and Stoker (2015) contend that Larkins encouraged staff and the board to view the Australian Government agencies charged with monitoring them (and which were not staffed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) as illegitimate guardians. Ironically, Menzies and Stoker (2015) also contend that the regulators did not monitor the OSHC closely because they assumed that the Aboriginal staff well understood the exploitation of the past, and would be particularly committed to ensuring the safety of the children in their care.



## **6. Policy implications of our analysis of the role of organisational culture in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts**

### **6.1 Culture considered broadly**

#### **6.1.1 Content**

The analysis presented above identifies a variety of cultural elements that facilitate child sexual abuse, slow its detection and undermine effective responses to abuse in institutional contexts. The most obvious policy implication of this analysis for those wishing to inhibit the perpetration, speed up the detection and enhance the response to child sexual abuse in organisations that deliver services to children and young people – whether they are oversight agencies, governing boards, organisational leaders and staff, or parents – is to purge these cultural elements. They can be replaced with cultural elements that inhibit child sexual abuse, speed up its detection and enhance effective responses to abuse. The scope of this report prohibits elaboration of all the cultural elements that stakeholders might wish to purge – and their possible replacements – because those elements will depend on the institutional context in question. For this reason, this report illustrates just a few elements that stakeholders might remove and a few possible alternatives.

The analysis presented indicates that perpetrators will be best able, and most inclined, to sexually abuse children when the organisation's culture endorses (or considers acceptable under certain conditions) grooming behaviours. For example, stakeholders of boarding schools might purge their cultures of the assumption that teachers developing close personal relationships with students (that involve sharing intimate personal information and physical expressions of affection such as hugs) is integral to effective teaching and indicative of exemplary performance. Further, they might strive to replace this cultural element with the assumption that teachers developing more professional relationships with students (in which the teacher is viewed as having expert knowledge and the student is viewed as their client) is integral to effective teaching and indicative of exemplary performance.

Similarly, the analysis presented indicates that victims of child sexual abuse are less likely to reveal their abuse when the organisation in which they are embedded exhibits a macho culture, which values stoicism in the face of harsh treatment at the hands of staff or peers. For example, stakeholders of sports clubs might attempt to replace the belief that remaining silent in the face of physical or psychological abuse is honourable and a sign of strength and maturity with its opposite – that reporting such treatment is honourable and a sign of a strength and maturity. In the case of child-to-child abuse, such a cultural shift would entail replacing the belief that victims who come forward are 'ratting on their brothers' with the belief that victims who come forward are courageously 'speaking truth to power'.

Finally, the analysis presented indicates that leaders and staff members are less likely to respond robustly to children's allegations of sexual abuse – especially if it is perpetrated by staff members – when the organisation's cultural norm is that children are unfaithful reporters of their experience. Thus, stakeholders of residential childcare facilities might change the cultural norm that leaders and staff members consider resident complaints of unfair and abusive treatment as dubious until independently confirmed, to one in which children's reports are taken at face value and responded to as if true, until proven otherwise.

## **6.1.2 Process**

### **6.1.2.1 Leadership**

As indicated in section 2.1.3, many believe that leaders play a crucial role in creating and transforming organisational cultures. Edgar Schein (1984), who developed one of the earliest and most authoritative analyses of organisational culture, delineated five ways in which leaders can convey cultural content: 1) by the kinds of people they hire and fire; 2) by the kinds of behaviour they reward and punish; 3) by the matters on which they focus their attention; 4) by the way they respond to crises; and 5) by the attitudes and behaviours they exhibit. While each of these dimensions of leader behaviour has practical significance, each also has symbolic significance; that is, each also conveys assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms to which leaders adhere and by implication to which employees are expected to subscribe. For example, when leaders terminate employees who engage in unethical behaviour, they eliminate the possibility that these individuals will engage in unethical behaviour against or on behalf of the organisation in the future; they also eliminate the possibility that these individuals will influence other organisational participants to engage in such behaviour. At the same time, they convey the message that ethical behaviour is valued and expected of organisational members.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the prescriptions that scholars and practitioners have offered to address child sexual abuse in institutional contexts fall into one or more of Schein's five categories of leader behaviour, and may have both practical and cultural significance (c.f. Tucci et al., 2015). For example, many prescriptions include exhortations to follow strict procedures to vet applicants for staff positions in organisations that deliver services to

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<sup>24</sup> It appears that Steven Larkins implicitly used several of these mechanisms to promote a culture that facilitated his perpetration of child sexual abuse. Most importantly, he exhibited a disregard for formal policies and procedures and allocated off-site training opportunities to staff members as a reward for faithful service to the OSHC facility (and himself) rather than as an opportunity to learn important information about the care of children. As a result, staff members were inhibited from detecting the abuse in which he was engaged due to a lack of training (Menzies & Stoker, 2015: 263).

children and young people (for example, by conducting police background checks, extensive reference consultations and thorough interviews). Such procedures reduce the likelihood that organisations will hire staff or volunteers who have been suspected or found to have perpetrated child sexual abuse in the past, making them prone to perpetrating or tolerating such abuse in their organisation. But they also convey to other organisational members that vigilance around child sexual abuse is a highly valued employee attribute.

One can imagine many other leader behaviours offered by scholars and practitioners to address child sexual abuse in institutional contexts that also fall into Schein's five categories. For example, leaders of organisations who talk to staff members, parents and children about child sexual abuse outside the context of formal training sessions are conveying that the issue is important to them, and implying that it should be important to others as well. Similarly, leaders who praise managers and staff members educating themselves about child sexual abuse or discussing the subject with peers outside formal training sessions convey that the issue is important to them and they value managers' and staff members' concerns.

#### **6.1.2.2 Socialisation**

The impact of leaders on an organisation's culture is limited, however (Palmer, 2012). By definition, all members share organisational cultures (whether it be the culture of the whole organisation or a segment of the culture). This means that cultures can be built from the bottom up (that is, they emanate from lower-level employees) or the top down (that is, they emanate from upper-level officials). Organisational cultures can even develop from side to side, emanating from the constituencies the organisation serves and those that give it external support. In addition, organisations have mechanisms through which non-leaders may come to embrace their organisation's culture. Organisational sociologists and management theorists refer to these mechanisms collectively as 'organisational socialisation'.

Schein (1961) is one of the earliest and most authoritative analysts of organisational socialisation. Schein draws an analytic distinction between 'training', which involves imparting rules, techniques and knowledge needed to perform organisational tasks, and 'socialisation', which involves imparting attitudes (in the language of this report: assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms) that provide a compelling rationale for embracing the organisation's training. Further, he delineates a three-stage process through which organisations tend to socialise their members. Very briefly, this process consists of: 1) unfreezing or eradicating internalised attitudes that stand in the way of embracing the organisation's training; 2) changing attitudes, which means inserting attitudes that provide a substantive (that is, value-based) rationale for embracing the training; and 3) refreezing, which entails reinforcing inserted attitudes.

Schein's framework can be used to develop a program to socialise new employees into assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms antithetical to the perpetration of child sexual abuse and conducive to its rapid detection and an effective response. Space constraints prohibit elaboration of a detailed program to socialise managers, staff, volunteers, parents and children into a culture that is antithetical to child sexual abuse. But broadly speaking, such a program would include periodic 'retreats' in which new members of the organisation would be required to participate in activities that implicitly denigrate forms of thinking and acting that the new recruits might embrace, but that the organisation seeks to discourage. Organisations might also pair new entrants with incumbent members who best exemplify the ways of thinking and acting that they seek to encourage (that is, members who can serve as role models). They should also offer new entrants an opportunity to develop their own accommodation to these new ways of thinking and acting so that the entrants internalise these new ways. Finally, they should structure new entrants' subsequent patterns of interaction within the organisation to integrate them into milieus that reinforce the new ways of thinking and acting.

For example, new coaches in a sports club might be required to attend a clinic where they are asked to explain how they would address a variety of difficult problems they might confront, but that they had not previously considered. Ideally, this experience would lead them to recognise that their current ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour (for example, those who endorse children behaving aggressively towards peers) are inadequate for the situations they will soon encounter. Further, new coaches might be paired with more experienced coaches who exemplify the assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms the organisation endorses (for example, those who champion supportive behaviour among peers). Finally, new coaches might be assigned to assist established coaches who exemplify the attitudes and behaviours the organisation endorses before being assigned to leadership roles on a team.

### **6.1.2.3 Engineering of artefacts and practices**

An organisational culture can also be conveyed to members via cultural artefacts and practices that symbolise the culture's assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Thus, leaders and others can shape the cultures of their organisations by creating artefacts and designing practices that convey preferred cultural content. Again, space constraints prohibit a detailed exposition of how artefacts and practices can be engineered to convey a culture that is antithetical to child sexual abuse. However, below we offer a few illustrations.

For example, sports clubs might institute awards (which are artefacts) and conduct award ceremonies (which are practices) that convey cultural content antithetical to child sexual abuse. Sports clubs often create awards and conduct ceremonies to recognise children for

their athletic achievements. In fact, as described in Case Study No. 15, Stephen Roser instituted the annual Stephen Roser Breast Stroke Award at the Scone Swimming Club, which was given to the club's best breaststroke swimmer. Sports clubs might instead (or also) create awards and orchestrate ceremonies to recognise children and coaches for behaviour consistent with assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms that help prevent child sexual abuse. For example, older, more accomplished athletes might be asked to serve as 'big brothers' or 'big sisters' to younger, less accomplished athletes (the terms 'big brother' and 'big sister' are artefacts). Further, those with exemplary performance in this role might be given an award in recognition. By extension, coaches might be given awards for developing children as total human beings, rather than just as athletic performers.

### **6.1.3 Barriers to cultural change**

While organisational stakeholders might do well to advocate that leaders telegraph appropriate cultural content, that staff be socialised into this content and that artefacts and practices be designed to reflect this content, no doubt significant barriers will impede these efforts. Organisational cultures arise partly because they solve organisational problems related to acquiring resources, producing goods and services, and marketing these goods and services to customers. For example, attempts to modify a swimming club's culture to include the value that the development of children as human beings is more important than their development as swimmers may be limited by the club's need to demonstrate competitive success. This is because competitive success increases the club's ability to recruit athletes whose parents are willing to pay membership fees and may even influence the clubs' access to competitive opportunities (for example, competitions).

## **6.2 Culture as it relates to child safe organisations**

A lot of effort has been devoted to identifying the characteristics of 'child safe organisations' in which child sexual abuse is infrequent, quickly detected when it occurs, and effectively dealt with. The literature on child safe organisations largely adopts a compliance approach. It exhorts organisational leaders to set guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, trains staff to follow these guidelines, establishes mechanisms for monitoring staff compliance, implements systems that reward compliance and punish non-compliance, and defines reporting relationships that facilitate the response to abuse when it is detected (Wurtele, 2012; Lanning & Dietz, 2014).

The literature on child safe organisations also exhorts organisations to adopt a culture that is conducive to preventing child sexual abuse and is amenable to detecting and effectively responding to abuse when it occurs. This added feature of the child safe organisation literature implicitly recognises that the attitudes and behaviours of organisational participants are not strictly the function of administrative controls and hierarchical authority. However, the child safe organisation literature is rather vague about the precise

nature of child safe cultures and the way these cultures can be implemented. This section draws on the literature, but specifies more precisely the nature of cultures associated with child safe organisations and elaborates the processes through which such cultures can be created.

## **6.2.1 The culture of safety-conscious organisations**

### **6.2.1.1 Content**

An organisation's safety culture consists of shared assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms relating to how organisational participants think and act about matters related to safety. As noted in section 5.9.1, the notion that organisations have safety cultures emerged as a result of investigations into major organisational accidents in the late 1980s (most famously, the Chernobyl nuclear reactor fire and meltdown). A strong safety culture is one that consists of assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms that support attitudes and behaviours that avoid missteps, promptly detect them when they occur, and effectively respond so they do not compromise organisational functioning. Such cultures cannot be instituted by managers in short order (such as with policies and procedures); instead, they emerge through social interaction among participants across all levels of the organisation over time.

A strong safety culture features the assumption that attitudes and behaviours geared towards increasing safety facilitate, rather than inhibit, organisational performance. More specifically, a strong safety culture exhibits the assumption that, in the long run, safe organisations produce higher-quality goods and services and are more profitable than unsafe organisations. Organisations with a strong safety culture are assumed to have fewer accidents; thus, they are assumed to incur lower accident-related costs. Further, organisations with a strong safety culture are assumed to have a stronger overarching culture; and organisations with a strong overarching culture are assumed to enjoy competitive advantages.

A strong safety culture also gives safety the highest priority, placing it above matters relating to the quality and quantity of products and services produced and delivered by the organisation – it features the belief that 'people come before profits'.

Finally, a strong safety culture features the norm that organisational participants interrupt normal operations when safety concerns arise, even when doing so increases costs and decreases output in the short term. In addition, in a strong safety culture, organisational participants address any safety concerns, even when doing so requires them to contravene administrative assignments, established communication channels and normal reporting relationships. In other words, workers are expected to address safety concerns even in

domains they aren't responsible for; even when doing so requires communicating with peers in unrelated units, and even when it necessitates overriding the orders of superiors.

A former senior manager of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area commuter railway implicitly highlighted the limitations of relying on a compliance approach and neglecting the development of a strong safety culture when he explained why the railway experienced persistent serious safety breaches in the last 15 years that resulted in multiple fatalities. He said:

*What I found at [Metro], you would set up a [safety] training session and two-thirds of the people wouldn't show up. Their managers felt they were needed for something more important.*

The manager thought he was partly to blame because he relied on a 'top-down management style'. As a result, the agency failed to develop a pervasive safety culture (McCartney & Duggan, 2016).

#### **6.2.1.2 Process**

Most prescriptions for creating strong safety cultures implicitly follow Schein's (1984) outlook in recommending that organisational leaders spearhead the effort for cultural change. For example, a publication of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the United States stipulates that the first step in building a strong safety culture is obtaining senior management 'buy in' (OSHA, 2016). Further, many of the concrete actions OSHA recommends senior managers take implicitly embrace one or more of Schein's (1984) five mechanisms through which leaders can convey cultural content. For example, OSHA recommends senior managers create a safety director and provide resources for incident investigations and safety training. This echoes Schein's contention that leaders can convey cultural content by their hiring and firing decisions and the matters they attend to.

Most prescriptions for building strong safety cultures also implicitly recommend creating artefacts and practices that convey cultural content. For example, OSHA (2016) recommends that organisations develop written policies (for example, on goals, measures and plans), establish training programs (for example, on improving hazard recognition and communication), form committees (for example, health and safety, and steering committees), and refine chains of command (for example, delineate roles and reporting relationships). When implemented, each of these recommendations has practical significance, but each also entails creating artefacts (for example, written policies) and/or practices (for example, holding regular meetings). Further, OSHA (2016) also recommends engaging in more explicitly symbolic activities. For example, it recommends enacting rituals that convey the importance of safety in the workplace, such as 'kick-off' events that

announce the arrival of a new perspective on safety, and periodic celebratory events that tout safety successes.

However, most prescriptions for creating a strong safety culture do not address the need to socialise new organisational members or re-socialise incumbent members into cultural assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms conducive to vigilance on safety matters. Instead, they focus on educating and training employees on *how* to be vigilant on safety matters.

## **6.2.2 The culture of child safe organisations**

### **6.2.2.1 Content**

Tucci and colleagues (2015) provide uniquely comprehensive guidelines for constructing what they, in the title of their work, refer to as a ‘child protection policy to support a safeguarding children culture in organizations and institutions’. Their guidelines lay out assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms that they consider can inhibit the perpetration, speed up the detection and enhance the response to child sexual abuse and other forms of child mistreatment in institutional contexts.

Specifically, Tucci and colleagues (2015) motivate their guidelines by the assumption that a variety of forms of ‘evidence’ have ‘left no doubt that organizations have always been and continue to be responsible for enacting a culture that ensures that their own staff and volunteers do not harm, abuse, or exploit children who are involved directly or indirectly with the activities or services provided by the organization’ (78). Further, they base their guidelines on a fundamental belief ‘in the dignity and right of each child and young person to safe and trusted relationships’ (81). Finally, Tucci and colleagues’ (2015) guidelines articulate a long list of attitudinal and behavioural expectations (that is, norms) that organisations should expect of their members. They argue that these can inhibit the perpetration, speed up the detection and enhance the response to child sexual abuse. To note just a few, the authors state that organisations should develop written policies that indicate they expect staff and volunteers ‘to understand children’s rights’; ‘to know and be willing to learn about child development, child abuse, and child protection’; ‘to act on any concerns raised by children, young people and/or their parents/carers’; ‘to protect children and young people’; and ‘not to obstruct or prevent anyone from reporting instances of abuse’ (83-84).

Of course, as Tucci and colleagues (2015: 80) readily acknowledge, such guidelines are necessarily highly abstract and it is up to organisational leaders to adapt them to their needs. As most organisational leaders likely recognise, it can be difficult to adapt abstract assumptions and values to concrete situations. For example, a sports club must balance the assumption that it is primarily responsible for ensuring the safety of its *children* with the



deeply ingrained competing assumption that it is primarily responsible for enhancing the physical prowess of its *athletes*. Relatedly, sports clubs must balance the belief that the safety of young children is of paramount importance, with the salient competing belief that the athletic development of children is the overriding objective.

In particular, organisations that are seeking to become child safe will probably need to develop and articulate understandings about the relationship between child safety and organisational performance that are appropriate for them. They will probably also need to formulate and espouse values and beliefs that prioritise child safety relative to other objectives in their specific institutional context. For example, the leadership of a youth soccer club might impress upon coaches and parents that only a small fraction of the best young athletes go on to compete at the highest levels of the sport. Most young athletes drop out of sport in their early adolescence. Those who continue competing into their late adolescence often switch to alternative sports (in the case of soccer, perhaps track and field). And among those who continue competing into adulthood, most never enter the professional ranks. Impressed with these facts, coaches and parents might come to assume that sports clubs that focus on the physical and psychological development of the whole child are the most successful. Further, they might come to view the development of the child as a complete human being as a more cherished value than the development of the child as an athlete.

#### **6.2.2.2 Process**

Tucci and colleagues (2015) also provide tips for organisational leaders to follow when implementing policies that support a 'safeguarding children culture'. They recommend that policies be written using 'language that is relevant to the organization, its people, and its mission', that they be developed with the involvement of 'different levels of the organization' and with the 'input of children and young people' in the organisation. They also recommend that they be subject to periodic external review and revision (2015: 80–81). But Tucci and colleagues (2015) do not discuss how leader behaviour, the socialisation (as opposed to the training) of employees and volunteers, and the crafting of artefacts and practices can be marshalled to facilitate employee adherence to written policies. These are avenues that scholars interested in developing such policies might wish to explore, and which we explore below in connection with a specialised subset of the literature on the cultures of safe organisations more generally.

## 6.3 Culture as it relates to high-reliability systems

### 6.3.1 Organisations that deliver services to children and young people conceptualised as high-reliability systems

While child sexual abuse in institutions is a relatively common phenomenon (Trocmé & Schumaker, 1999; Schumacher & Carlson, 1999; Shakeshaft, 2004; Beck et al., 2010; Euser et al., 2013; Quadara et al., 2015), only a small fraction of all organisations that deliver services to children and young people report instances of child sexual abuse in any given year (Gallagher, 2000).<sup>25</sup> However, when child sexual abuse occurs in organisations, it has significant adverse psychological effects on its victims. In fact, some scholars contend that reported child sexual abuse has more significant effects on victims in institutional contexts (as opposed to in the family or community), because the sometimes highly public nature of its reporting can increase the trauma victims experience (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Thus, reported instances of child sexual abuse can be considered relatively rare but highly adverse events.

A subset of the literature on organisational safety explores factors that allow organisations to avoid and effectively respond to rare, but highly adverse, events (Weick, 1987; Weick & Roberts, 1993; Catino, 2013). These theorists refer to such organisations as ‘high reliability organisations’ (HROs). Most management theorists who study the factors underpinning high reliability focus on organisations that use complex and tightly coupled technologies, such as nuclear power plants and aircraft carriers, because these organisations are most subject to safety breaches that can have catastrophic consequences. The nature of complexity and tight coupling are briefly described below in abstract terms, drawing heavily from Palmer and Maher’s (2010) analysis of the global financial crisis of 2008 and Perrow’s (1999) seminal work on industrial accidents. The extent to which organisations that deliver services to children and young people can be considered complex, tightly coupled systems is then considered.

Complex systems are composed of large numbers of interconnections among subunits. These interconnections are typified by ‘common mode relationships’ (in which one unit is related to multiple other units that are related to one another), ‘branching relationships’ (in which one unit is linked to multiple units, each of which is related to multiple other units), and ‘feedback loops’ (in which one unit is linked through other units to itself). In addition, the interconnections in complex systems are difficult to comprehend and the interactions they give rise to are hard to predict for the people who operate them. Relationships can be

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<sup>25</sup> It is hard to know precisely how often organisations experience instances of child sexual abuse because much abuse is never reported.

incomprehensible and interactions can be unpredictable because they are inherently so (that is, they are regulated by stochastic as opposed to deterministic processes) or because knowledge of them is incomplete. Finally, the interactions in complex systems are difficult or impossible to monitor directly and thus their status must be assessed on the basis of indirect evidence.

Tightly coupled systems have little slack. When a tightly coupled system's performance standards are not met, the system fails (rather than just limping along at a lower performance level). Further, the design requirements of tightly coupled systems are rigid. If unexpected contingencies arise, there is little opportunity to modify the system's design. If the design requires that elements be combined to establish an interconnection, specific elements must be used and these specific elements must be combined in a particular order and in a particular time frame. Substitutes cannot be employed, alternative sequences cannot be used and delay or acceleration of the process is not possible. Further, there is little redundancy in tightly coupled systems. If a part or unit or subsystem fails, the entire system fails. Finally, if a system fails, it tends to unwind quickly and inexorably, leaving operators powerless to design and implement a fix.

Organisations that deliver services to children and young people, despite the fact that they use relatively few high-technology devices, resemble complex, tightly coupled systems in important ways. Perhaps most importantly, because their principal objective is the transformation of human beings, the relationships within such organisations (relationships between staff and children and between children and their peers) are relatively difficult to analyse, and the interactions to which they give rise are relatively unpredictable from the point of view of staff members responsible for regulating them. Further, the status of these relationships is monitored indirectly, insofar as staff members' and children's thoughts can only be inferred from observing their overt behaviours. Organisations also resemble tightly coupled systems because they tend to operate on shoestring budgets; thus, they enjoy little redundancy in the areas of human and other resources.

To see how this might be the case, consider the following hypothetical example of a childcare centre with three staff members; two are directed to report to the school when it officially opens at 7 am and one is assigned to arrive at 6.30 am to prepare a breakfast snack for children to eat on their arrival. Now imagine that a parent unexpectedly drops off their child early (say at 6.45 am) because they have to run a few errands before they start work. Now the staff member who arrived at 6.30 am will have to suspend the breakfast snack preparation to care for the child, requiring all three staff members to juggle preparing the breakfast snack and attending to children being dropped off at the official opening time. This modification of the daily routine would likely be quite manageable.

But, imagine additional departures from the daily routine. Imagine that in addition to a child being dropped off early, one staff member calls in sick, reducing the staff-to-child ratio. This

further complicates preparation of the breakfast snack and attending to the children being dropped off at the official opening time. Now imagine that one or more of the children being dropped off at the official opening time are particularly difficult to manage (for example, because they had a conflict with their parent just before arriving). This would make it even harder for staff to prepare the breakfast snack and welcome the arriving students in a satisfactory fashion. Many childcare centres have a roster of back-up teachers they can call on in emergency situations such as this. But it would probably be an hour or more before a back-up teacher could arrive. In this time, any number of other unexpected events could occur (for example, a child could fall sick or be injured or two children could get into conflict).

This hypothetical, albeit realistic, scenario illustrates the complexity and tight coupling that can characterise the ‘technology’ of organisations that deliver services to children and young people. The insights below are derived from the literature on high-reliability organisations that use complex, tightly coupled technologies and are applied to organisations that deliver services to children and young people. Much of what follows is based on Maurizio Catino’s (2013: 189–212) comprehensive synthesis of the literature on high-reliability organisations.

### **6.3.2 The content of high-reliability organisation cultures and possible implications for organisations that deliver services to children and young people**

High-level policy prescriptions developed by senior management for avoiding, detecting and responding to rare adverse events are difficult to implement in concrete organisational contexts. Implementing such high-level policy prescriptions is particularly problematic for complex, tightly coupled systems. Thus, HROs typically involve front-line workers in a process of translating high-level policy prescriptions into workable concrete guidelines. For example, all personnel involved in the ‘recovery’ of planes on aircraft carriers – from the chief of landing operations to the deck hands who communicate visually with pilots on landing – periodically meet as equals to refine the procedures used to land planes on the ship.

A similar solution might be implemented in a before- and after-school childcare organisation as follows. Organisational leaders might disseminate the high-level prescription that at least two adults must supervise each child at any given moment. But it might be unrealistic to expect that front-line staff members can follow such a prescription in all circumstances, given cost-related staffing constraints. To address this problem, caregivers could be asked to participate in a group problem-solving session, along with senior management, to develop a workable concrete guideline that works with staffing constraints. This approach contrasts with the standard approach in which high-level officials dictate rules and staff members are left to figure out ad hoc compliance.

### **6.3.3 The processes of high-reliability organisation cultures and possible implications for those that deliver services to children and young people**

Typically, organisations quickly forget threats that fail to materialise and threats that do materialise but are handled effectively. When organisations do this, they forego opportunities to learn from their experience. The failure to learn from these situations, so-called ‘near misses’, is particularly problematic for complex, tightly coupled systems. Thus, HROs devote considerable attention to such near misses. They convene periodic meetings of senior management and staff to identify and explore near misses to understand their causes, consider how they were handled and how they might have been handled better. The goal of such meetings is not to assign responsibility for perceived errors, but rather to learn why and how mistakes might have occurred. They also use the near miss as an occasion for the group to consider how they might work differently and more effectively to avoid and respond to such incipient failures in the future. In the HRO literature, this is referred to as ‘scenario testing’. For example, most hospitals periodically convene mortality and morbidity conferences (M&Ms), in which recent lapses in care are evaluated dispassionately, with the goal of understanding their causes and an eye to avoiding similar lapses in the future (Gewande, 1999).

A similar solution might be implemented in a before- and after-school childcare organisation as follows. Senior management and staff might meet periodically to recall and discuss instances where staff have breached professional conduct; for example, by behaving in ways associated with grooming children (such as placing a child on one’s lap) or by being in situations associated with abuse (unsupervised one-on-one contact with a child). The object of the discussion would be to analyse why the behaviours occurred and to consider whether alternative behaviours could have accomplished the same situational objective (for example, in the case of placing a child on one’s lap, finding another way to control a restless child while leading a group activity). The discussion would need to be conducted in a way that did not make the individual involved defensive. This could be achieved by adopting features of hospital M&M conferences, such as assigning a person not involved in the ‘red flag’ behaviour to describe and answer questions about the behaviour. The detection of individuals engaged in child sexual abuse might be an important byproduct of such periodic meetings.

### **6.3.4 The potential benefits of the high-reliability organisation approach**

Implementing HRO principles in organisations could have beneficial side effects for inhibiting, detecting and responding to child sexual abuse. These include: 1) they would signal the importance of reducing and eliminating child sexual abuse in the organisation; 2) they would involve staff in the process of addressing child sexual abuse, enhancing their commitment to the objective; 3) they would involve staff members in group interaction,

creating social pressure to embrace the objective of eradicating child sexual abuse; 4) they would normalise the discussion of child sexual abuse, breaking taboos; and 5) they might drive individuals predisposed to engaging in child sexual abuse, but who passed the organisation's screening process, from the organisation.

## 7. Conclusion

This report analyses the role that organisational culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. The report's analysis uses the Royal Commission's definitions of child sexual abuse, institutional contexts and organisational culture. The report's analysis is based on a systematic search and review of the literature. It concluded there was no existing empirical evidence or theoretical base on organisational culture and institutional child sexual abuse, beyond recognition that it was important. The analysis is also based on the author's knowledge of the role that culture plays in misconduct in and by organisations more generally. Finally, the report's analysis draws on seven official case studies provided by the Royal Commission and on newspaper articles, news magazine stories and books that relate to instances of child sexual abuse that occurred in institutional contexts in the United States and elsewhere around the globe.

The report begins with a discussion of background issues relating to the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and the response to it in institutional contexts; issues that must be taken into account to develop a deep understanding of the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. It then elaborates cultural currents operating at the societal level that influence the perpetration and detection of child sexual abuse and responses to it. This provides the backdrop against which organisational cultures influence child sexual abuse in institutional contexts; cultural currents relating to childhood, gender, race and sexual orientation; and child sexual abuse as a social problem.

The subsequent analysis of the role that organisational culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts is divided into two parts. The first part explores the role that culture plays in child sexual abuse in a unique type of organisational context – the 'total institution' ideal type. In such an institution, members are sharply delineated into staff and inmates; staff members comprehensively control all facets of inmates' lives; and inmates' lives are restricted to a demarcated physical space. Six features of the cultures of total institutions are identified that make them particularly conducive to the perpetration of child sexual abuse and particularly resistant to its speedy detection and an effective response when it occurs: their tendency to constitute alternative moral universes for staff and inmates; their tendency to embrace variably explicit assumptions about human nature and theories of human transformation as they relate to inmates; their tendency to extinguish the pre-institutional identities of inmates; their tendency to withhold information about the institution's operation from inmates, staff and external constituencies; their unique power structures; and their informal group dynamics.

The second part of the analysis explores the role that organisational culture plays in child sexual abuse in organisational contexts that do not conform to the 'total institution' ideal type. Nine types of organisational culture that can support the perpetration of child sexual

abuse, slow its detection and impede an effective response are identified: cultures associated with 'institutionalised organisations'; macho cultures; cultures that support child sexual abuse, grooming behaviours and sexualised behaviours more generally; cultures that do not support the open discussion of matters relating to sex and child sexual abuse; cultures that inhibit and undermine children's self-expression; senior management cultures; cultures that intensify the negative impact of power differentials; cultures that intensify the negative impact of informal group dynamics; and cultures that undermine faithful compliance to good governance mechanisms designed to inhibit the perpetration, speed up the detection and enhance the response to child sexual abuse.

This report also offers three types of suggestions about how one might use its analysis of the role that organisational culture plays in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts to reduce the incidence, speed up the detection and enhance the response to abuse. First, it recommends *that* the stakeholders of organisations that provide services to children and young people pledge to introduce organisation-wide cultural content that is antithetical to the types of cultural content that facilitate child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, as laid out in the report's analysis. Further, it offers suggestions on *how* the stakeholders of organisations that provide services to children and young people might promote such a culture. These include encouraging leaders to engage in behaviours that convey the suggested cultural content; socialising staff members to embrace such cultural content; and engineering cultural artefacts and practices that symbolise such content.

Second, the report suggests that stakeholders of organisations that provide services to children and young people could draw on the insights from the literature on 'safety cultures' more generally to enhance the literature on 'child safe cultures'. The literature on child safe cultures focuses on developing written high-level policies and procedures and articulating the underlying assumptions, values and beliefs, and norms that support adherence to such policies and procedures. This is good, but it underestimates the difficulty of translating such high-level policies and procedures into work routines that can be implemented effectively and efficiently in specific organisational contexts. The literature on child safe organisations focuses on leader behaviour and staff training as mechanisms for implementing child safe guidelines. This too is good, but it fails to take into account the benefits that can be derived from developing socialisation efforts that can encourage staff members, children and young people to embrace elements of a child safe culture. It also fails to take into account the benefits of designing artefacts and practices that symbolise elements of a child safe culture. The literature on safety cultures draws attention to the importance of going beyond high-level policies and procedures, and emphasises the importance of using symbolic means to convey cultural content that supports a safety focus.

Third, the report suggests that stakeholders of organisations that provide services to children and young people could draw on the insights from the literature on high-reliability systems to enhance the literature on child safe cultures. The literature on high-reliability



systems examines the characteristics of complex, tightly coupled organisations that are robust to rare but severely adverse events. The report proposes that many organisations that provide services to children and young people can be considered complex and tightly coupled systems and that detected instances of child sexual abuse can be likened to rare but severely adverse effects. Thus, it suggests that some of the approaches that follow from the high-reliability systems literature might be effective in organisations that provide services to children and young people. The most notable are the extensive involvement of lower-level staff members in forming policies and procedures to inhibit the perpetration, speed up the detection and enhance the response to child sexual abuse. The other notable suggestion is that lower-level staff be involved in the persistent scrutiny of instances where risks relating to child sexual abuse emerge, with the goal of continuous process improvement in inhibiting, detecting and responding to abuse.

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