



SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

**CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE: IMPLICATIONS
FOR UNDERSTANDING SATANIC RITUAL ABUSE
ALLEGATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The goals of the present study were to examine the extent of children's religious, especially satanic, knowledge and to understand the influence of children's age, religious training, family, and media exposure on that knowledge.

Methods: Using a structured interview, 48 3- to 16-year-old children were questioned about their knowledge of: (a) religion and religious worship; (b) religion-related symbols and pictures; and (c) movies, music, and television shows with religious and horror themes.

Results: Although few children evinced direct knowledge of ritual abuse, many revealed general knowledge of satanism and satanic worship. With age, children's religious knowledge increased and became more sophisticated. Increased exposure to nonsatanic horror media was associated with more nonreligious knowledge that could be considered precursory to satanic knowledge, and increased exposure to satanic media was associated with more knowledge related to satanism.

Conclusions: Our results suggest that children do not generally possess sufficient knowledge of satanic ritual abuse to make up false allegations on their own. However, many children have knowledge of satanism as well as nonreligious knowledge

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of violence, death, and illegal activities. It is possible that such knowledge could prompt an investigation of satanic ritual abuse or possibly serve as a starting point from which an allegation is erected. © 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd

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INTRODUCTION

IN THE 1980s, child welfare advocates were shocked by allegations of a new and startling form of child maltreatment, satanic ritual abuse. Ritual abuse was said to occur in the context of bizarre satanic activities involving murder, torture, and sacrifice of humans and animals, cannibalism, and other horrendous atrocities (Bottoms, Shaver, & Goodman, 1996; Ryder, 1992; Sakheim & Devine, 1992). Reports came from “adult survivors,” that is, adults who claimed to have experienced ritual abuse during their childhood (Lawrence, Cozolino, & Foy, 1995; Smith & Pazder, 1980; Young, Sachs, Braun, & Watkins, 1991), as well as from children who also described ritual abuse, often in day care settings (Jonker & Jonker-Bakker, 1991; Kelley, 1993, 1996; Waterman, Kelly, Oliveri, & McCord, 1993). A typical case was reported by Jonker and Jonker-Bakker in 1991. A 4-year-old boy with anal bleeding entered therapy, then disclosed sexual abuse involving numerous other children. Over the course of the ensuing 18-month legal investigation, nearly 100 children between the ages of 4 and 11 years were questioned about possible satanic abuse. Some described bizarre events such as violent sexual contact with children and adults, having objects inserted into their genitalia and rectums, ingesting feces and urine, witnessing satanic symbols being carved onto the backs of infants, and being forced to assist with murders. Despite the extremity of the allegations, no physical or other corroborative evidence was ever found, and serious questions were raised about the veracity of the children’s allegations (e.g., Rogers, 1992; Rossen, 1992). The case was eventually dismissed.

As more and more cases followed a similar course, the reality of ritual abuse was questioned (e.g., Lanning, 1989, 1991; Richardson, Best, & Bromley, 1991; Victor, 1993). Indeed, converging sources of evidence now suggest that the threat of highly organized, secret satanic cults was almost surely exaggerated. Large-scale survey research has failed to find corroborative evidence of the satanic elements of ritual abuse cases (Bottoms et al., 1996), alleged victims have recanted their claims (Keenan, 1995) or been discredited (Corwin, 1996; Passantino, Passantino, & Trott, 1990), and neither police nor FBI agents have found physical evidence that organized satanic cults are actively engaged in the abuse of children (Lanning, 1991, 1992). This is not to say that there have never been any cases of child abuse involving bizarre elements scripted from a perpetrator’s quasi-religious or satanic belief system. Rather, large-scale, organized conspiracies of child-abusing satanic cults appear unlikely to exist. It also does not imply that all ritual cases are wholly untrue. In some such cases, real abuse may have occurred, but the florid aspects such as mass killings and cannibalism may have been inaccurate, distorted, or fictitious (Jones, 1991; Putnam, 1991; Weir & Wheatcroft, 1995). As stated by Lanning (1989), there may be a continuum of possible activity such that some of what the victims allege may be true and accurate, some may be misperceived or distorted, and some may be contaminated or false.

If many ritual abuse allegations have been partially or wholly untrue, an important question to be considered is how adults and children came to believe that they were ritually abused by satanic cults that did not exist. To what do we attribute the unlikely portions of ritual abuse allegations, such as multiple murders, sadistic ritual ceremonies, and cannibalism? The answer is inevitably complex. From a psychological perspective, vulnerable individuals (perhaps due to histories of real abuse or inherent suggestibility; Ganaway, 1989) might be inadvertently led to believe they were abused after exposure to suggestive media, leading forensic interviews, or therapy involving suggestive memory recovery techniques (Bottoms & Davis, *in press*; Lindsay & Read, 1995). Media coverage and special seminars dealing with satanism and satanic abuse have provided adults

and children with considerable knowledge about the prototypical features of ritual abuse claims (Bottoms et al., 1996; Mulhern, 1991, 1992). Professionals (e.g., social workers, clinicians, legal investigators) and nonprofessionals (e.g., parents, friends) may transfer such information to children through leading questions asked in the context of formal or informal interviews (Lanning, 1992). In fact, the literature now includes descriptions of cases in which suggestive but well-intentioned questioning from concerned therapists, parents, foster parents, and others was the likely source of children's false ritual allegations (Corwin, 1996; Nathan & Snedeker, 1995; Weir & Wheatcroft, 1995).

When ritual abuse first surfaced as a national concern, one of the primary arguments made by believers of the claims was that children could not allege ritual abuse without actually having witnessed or experienced it directly (Jonker & Jonker-Bakker, 1991). Could they? Weir and Wheatcroft (1995) have noted that "children's general knowledge of ceremonies, witches, and the occult may be much more than professionals appreciate" (p. 498). How much knowledge relevant to ritual abuse claims do children normally possess? What do they know about ritualistic physical and sexual abuse occurring under the guise of satanism, or about Satan, hell, and the occult generally? Do they know enough to make statements that could spur a concerned parent or investigator to question a child about ritual abuse, and in turn perhaps create false allegations?

Our goals in conducting the present research were threefold: (a) to determine the extent of children's knowledge of satanic ritual abuse as well as children's knowledge of more general religious (including satanic) information that might form the basis of ritual abuse claims; (b) to investigate the development of that knowledge across childhood and adolescence; and (c) to identify possible sources of that knowledge. We expected to find that children could attain religious knowledge, particularly knowledge of satanism or ritual abuse, from sources other than actual victimization. These sources include the media, the family environment, and religious training. Before describing our methods and findings, we review what is currently known about children's religious (including satanic) knowledge and its sources. We restrict our discussion to the knowledge and experiences of Protestant and Catholic children and families because they are representative of the religious majority in the U.S. and were the pool from which our research participants were drawn.

Children's Religious and Ritual Abuse Knowledge

Although little is known about children's knowledge of satanism, studies exist on the development of children's understanding of God, angels, parables, and prayers (see Hyde, 1990, for a review). It is reasonable to expect that the development of children's knowledge of "negative" religious concepts such as Satan and hell parallels the development of their knowledge of more "positive" religious concepts such as angels. Generally, with age, children's religious knowledge appears to progress through stages of increasing sophistication or abstractness (e.g., Bucher, 1991; Deonchy, 1991; Goldman, 1964). To illustrate, in a classic study of children's conceptions of God, Harms (1944) asked 3- to 18-year-olds to draw God. In what Harms referred to as the "fairytale" stage, young children (3 to 6 years) saw God as a "king who lives in a big golden house above the clouds." During the "realism" stage (6 to 11 years), children's drawings of God were more consistent with traditional, institutional religious teachings (e.g., envisioning God in terms of greatness and strength). In the "individualistic" stage (12 to 18 years), there was a great deal of diversity in drawings, but generally, adolescents' conceptualizations of God were abstract, complex, and symbolic. Similar developmental trends have been noted in children's understanding of parables (Bucher, 1991). Specifically, young children interpret religious stories literally, but by the elementary school years, children begin to realize that parables contain simple moral messages. As adolescence approaches, children come to understand the more symbolic, theological meanings that underlie parables.

In 1971 Elkind wrote, "By and large, the results of studies dealing with the conception of heaven, hell, soul, and so forth, seem to show that these are conceived in conventional form with considerable spontaneous elaboration. A definitive developmental study of these conceptions remains to be carried out" (p. 677). But 25 years later, we still know surprisingly little about the development of children's religious knowledge, especially the nature and development of children's knowledge about negative concepts such as hell and Satan (Hyde, 1990). Responding to this need, we explored children's knowledge of positive and negative religious concepts across four developmental levels.

Sources of religious knowledge. As noted, we sought to identify the sources of children's religion-related and satanic knowledge and explored three likely sources: a child's conventional religious training, family beliefs, and media exposure. Many children are taught very early about religion and its meaning through developmentally appropriate instructional classes (e.g., Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Catechism) or through regular sermons and masses attended with their families. The teachings may include information about sin, Satan, and hell. In some churches, not only has satanic ritual abuse been explicitly discussed, but parishioners have been taught how to identify satanists. Children are likely to interpret such religious information literally (e.g., Pottebaum, Freeburg, & Kelleher, 1992). In fundamentalist religions, which encourage literal interpretation of biblical concepts, both children and adults may interpret information discussed in services or presented in the *Bible* in a concrete, literal manner (e.g., Grasmick, Bursik, & Kimpel, 1991). Thus, it is quite likely that children gain some knowledge of satanism and possibly ritual abuse via their experiences in traditional worship settings.

Children's families may also be an important source of religious, and perhaps even ritual-relevant, information. Despite some fluctuations during adolescence, there is a high degree of similarity between children's and parents' religiosity (Hyde, 1990). Parents may talk to their children about religion, read *Bible* stories, and have religious symbols displayed in their home. Very religious families may engage in discussions about religion, including discussions of hell, Satan, and sin more frequently than less religious families, providing their children with details about Satan. Parents may also explicitly provide information about ritual abuse to their children. There are several case examples in the literature of family members asking their children highly leading questions about ritual abuse after learning about it through seminars, church, or television (Bottoms et al., 1996; Corwin, 1996; Weir & Wheatcroft, 1995).

Finally, as Lanning (1989) and then others (e.g., Coons, 1994; Putnam, 1991) suggested, it is possible that children acquire knowledge relevant to satanic abuse from the media, including movies, television programs, and music. Even very young children can recall information presented via television, especially when an adult narrator is present (Watkins, Calvert, Huston-Stein, & Wright, 1980). Talk shows (e.g., Rivera, 1988), weekly dramas (e.g., Carter, 1993), and investigative programs covering topics related to the occult and even ritual abuse make information about satanic abuse allegations available to children, and, as mentioned, to parents, who may then discuss satanic ritual abuse with their children (Putnam, 1991).

Other media that contain satanic information, such as books, movies, and music, are also available to children. Many heavy metal rock groups (e.g., Ozzy Osbourne, Incubus, Slayer) display satanic symbols and other satanic referents (e.g., animal sacrifices, graveyard worship scenes) on their album covers and band paraphernalia (e.g., concert t-shirts). For example, a compact disc cover for the band "Slayer" is packaged so that skull cut-outs float in blood-like fluid over a picture of an inverted cross. Satanic information is also contained in the band's lyrics. It stands to reason that children who are exposed to such media will have satanic knowledge that could potentially form the basis of a ritual abuse claim.

Thus, there are many sources from which children can obtain information relevant to satanism and ritual abuse. Children may be exposed to satanic information through church, family, or the

media. But little is known about how much of it they actually understand or retain, or whether what is retained is sufficient to formulate a ritual abuse report or prompt a ritual investigation.

Overview of the Present Study

We interviewed 3- to 16-year-old children about their understanding of religious concepts such as God, Satan, heaven, and hell, and asked them for their interpretations of drawings and symbols with religious, especially satanic, connotations. To investigate the sources of children's knowledge, we gathered information about their family's religiosity as well as children's exposure to media depicting violence, supernatural activities, and satanic activity. Finally, to assess the influence of religious background, children from two religious groups, Protestant and Catholic, were included, chosen because of their prevalence in the U.S. population. We made comparisons between the two groups but advanced no formal hypotheses about differences that might exist in their religious knowledge. Within the two religions, families varied considerably in their reported religiosity. Note that although satanism is a religion and thus constitutes one type of religious knowledge, for the purpose of clarity, we have chosen to use the term "religious knowledge" to refer to information relevant to any religion except satanism. Satanic information is referred to separately as "satanic knowledge."

Based on prior research, we made the following predictions:

1. With age, children's religious and satanic knowledge would increase and become more abstract (e.g., Bucher, 1991; Piaget, 1929).
2. Compared to less religious families, more religious families would attend church services more frequently, display more religious symbols in their homes, and place more emphasis on religious issues and values. Thus, we expected that children from highly religious families would possess more religious and satanic knowledge than children from less religious families.
3. Children with greater exposure to media containing satanic referents would display more satanic knowledge than children with less exposure, because their exposure would have given them more opportunities to learn about satanism than children not exposed to such material.

METHOD

Participants

Forty-eight children from mainly middle-class families participated. Three were African American, one was Asian, and the remainder were of European descent. There were 12 children in each of four age groups: 3- to 4-year-olds ($M = 49$ months, $range = 36-59$ months), 7- to 8-year-olds ($M = 93$ months, $range = 85-100$ months), 11- to 12-year-olds ($M = 140$ months, $range = 132-148$ months), and 15- to 16-year-olds ($M = 195$ months, $range = 183-202$ months). The two religious affiliations, Protestant and Catholic, were equally represented, and males and females were distributed approximately evenly across the 4 (age group) \times 2 (religion) conditions. All children except two were within the normal range of behavioral adjustment according to total Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) scores ($M = 50.09$, $range = 34$ to 82; see below for a description of the CBCL). These two children did not differ from other same-age and same-gender children on any of our dependent measures, thus we have included them in all analyses reported below.

Materials

Demographic questionnaire. This measure was composed of a set of questions assessing general characteristics of the participants (ethnicity, age, family's economic status).

Religiosity questionnaire. Several questions, completed by children's parents, assessed children's and families' religion-related beliefs and behaviors. Four items were based on scales devised by McIntosh, Silver, and Wortman (1993): two measures of parents' and children's religiosity on a scale from 1 (*not at all religious*) to 7 (*very religious*), and two measures of the frequency with which parents and children attended religious services or instruction on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*more than once a week*). Finally, two separate questions asked whether the family displayed religious symbols in the home and whether the child attended parochial school.

Media Exposure Questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to identify, via parental report, the extent of children's exposure to various media. The questionnaire contained a list of movies, television shows, and music groups from four categories: religious, supernatural/horror, satanic, and neutral/children's media (see Appendix A for a complete list of items). Neutral/children's media items were included in the questionnaire only as fillers and will not be considered further.

Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1986). This parent-completed standardized questionnaire assessed family functioning styles. We used only one of its subscales, the moral-religious subscale, which assesses moral and religious family functioning. Several studies support the construct validity of the FES subscales (e.g., Moos, 1990; Sandler & Barrera, 1984). Internal consistency for the moral-religious subscale has been reported as .78 and test-retest reliability as .80 (Moos & Moos, 1986).

Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991). This parental-report measure identifies children's internalizing (e.g., depression, somatic complaints) and externalizing (e.g., delinquency, aggressiveness) behavior problems. The psychometric properties of the CBCL are exemplary for scales of this type (Achenbach, 1994). For normal children, median short-term (1 week) and test-retest reliabilities are both .89, and median interrater (mother and father) agreement is .66 (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). The CBCL has also been shown to be acceptable in terms of content, construct, and criterion validity.

Children's Knowledge Questionnaire (CKQ). The CKQ was developed specifically for the present study to determine the extent of children's knowledge of ritual abuse as well as their knowledge of religion, satanism, and nonreligious information that could be considered precursory to ritual allegations. The CKQ contained five sections (see Appendix B for a complete list of CKQ questions and stimuli). Section 1 included open-ended questions about God, the devil, heaven, hell, witches, and angels. The questions probed for children's understanding of the concepts, such as the location and purpose or function of each entity.

Section 2 concerned children's media knowledge. This section was administered by providing children with the names of television programs and movies and asking if the children recognized the shows and what the shows were about. The movies and television programs included neutral, religious, supernatural/horror, and satanic shows. Children were also provided with record album and compact disc covers and asked if they recognized the albums and knew what kind of music they contained. The albums included neutral, religious, and heavy metal music.

Section 3 assessed children's knowledge of religious, nonreligious, and satanic symbols. Children were shown pictures of various symbols and asked to identify them.

Section 4 contained four open-ended questions: Two about God and two about the devil. The first question concerned what people do to worship God, and the second asked what people do to worship the devil. The third question asked what good things people might do if God told them to do something good, and the final question asked what bad things people might do if the devil tempted them to do something bad.

Section 5 consisted of a set of 12 pictures (see Appendix B). Three of the 12 pictures depicted

neutral scenes, five depicted religious scenes, and four depicted satanic scenes. Seven of the scenes were emotionally positive, and five were emotionally negative. The religious and neutral scenes were obtained from various children's books. Although all scenes are briefly described in Appendix B, the satanic stimuli deserve a more detailed description. One of the four satanic pictures came from a children's book. This picture showed the devil talking to a woman. The other three satanic pictures came from a set of drawings devised for use in therapy with children suspected of having been ritualistically abused (Northwest Psychological Publishers, no date). One scene depicted hooded figures standing around a fire in a graveyard, with children looking into an open grave. Another scene showed a boy sitting in a ring of candles looking up at a goat's head above an altar. The third picture from the series depicted robed figures standing around a sheet-covered table and a large inverted pentagram displayed on a wall. We thought it particularly important to use these stimuli in light of their intended purpose—to elicit accounts of ritual abuse experiences. Even so, we altered them somewhat to make sure they would not be upsetting to children. The scenes were ambiguous enough that, without specific knowledge of satanic abuse or satanism, children would not be expected to understand the negative, satanic meaning of the pictures.

Procedure

Children were recruited from a pool of families who had expressed an interest in developmental research. Parents were contacted by phone and informed that we were conducting a study of developmental changes in children's media and educational knowledge. Parents were not told of our specific interest in children's religious knowledge until they arrived because we did not want them to provide children with religious information specifically for our study. Upon arrival, parents were shown all CKQ interview questions and stimuli prior to their child's participation. No parent refused to participate once she or he learned of our specific objectives and methods. After their written consent was obtained, parents were asked to complete the demographic, religious, and media exposure questionnaires; the FES; and the CBCL.

Meanwhile, children were interviewed individually by research assistants who were uninformed of the children's religion and the study's hypotheses. Interviewers obtained children's assent to participate before administering the CKQ. Note that, for Section 5 of the CKQ, each picture was presented twice. The first time, children were asked to tell a story about each picture. The second time, children were: (a) told that other children thought either something good or something bad was happening in each scene; and (b) asked to describe what that good or bad thing might be. Pilot work indicated that this emotional-valence prompting elicited more ritual-relevant information from children. The good and bad prompts were counterbalanced. For half of the children, the good and bad prompts matched the emotional valence of the scene. For example, when shown the picture of the angel talking to a person, half of the children were asked, "Some kids thought that something good was happening in this picture. What do you think that could be?" For the other half of the children, the good and bad prompts were incongruent with the emotional valence of the scene. For example, when shown the angel scene, these children were asked, "Some kids thought that something bad was happening in this picture. What do you think that could be?"

After completing the CKQ, children were debriefed, children and parents were thanked, parents were paid, and children received small gifts.

RESULTS

Coding the CKQ

Abstractness. To score children's understanding of religious and satanic concepts, as tapped in Section 1 of the CKQ, we created a 3-point "abstractness" scale. A child received a score of 0 for

each “inaccurate/omission” response, including “do not know” responses and responses that were incorrect in relation to basic or traditional religious teachings (e.g., “Up in the sky” in response to the question “Where is hell?;” “The devil is Jesus” in response to the question “Who is the devil?”). A child received a score of 1 for each “concrete-correct” response, defined as a response that was congruent with traditional, fundamentalist religious teachings (e.g., “Hell is down” in response to the question “Where is hell?;” or “The devil is the leader of hell” in response to the question “Who is the devil?”). A score of 2 was given for each “abstract-correct” response, that is, responses that were correct in relation to theoretical religious teachings (e.g., “Hell is a state of being” in response to the question “Where is hell?;” or “The devil is a part of everyone” in response to the question “Who is the devil?”). (Ambiguous and unscorable responses constituted only 4.71% of children’s answers and will not be considered further.)

Two research assistants independently scored the responses of 16 children who were representative of each age and religion. Proportion of agreement was .92. After disagreements were resolved through discussion, one assistant coded the remaining data. Responses were summed, and a mean abstractness score was created for each child (ranging from 0 to 2).

Knowledge. Children’s responses to Sections 2–5 of the CKQ were scored for the type of knowledge expressed. All idea units that could be included in one of the following categories were scored: religious (nonsatanic) knowledge, nonreligious-precursor knowledge (nonreligious knowledge that could be a potential precursor to satanic ritual abuse knowledge), satanic knowledge, and satanic ritual child abuse knowledge. If a sentence included multiple idea units, each received a score (e.g., the sentence, “They worship the devil and kill animals” would receive two idea units). Idea units were coded as “religious knowledge” if religion was explicitly referenced or if the statement was a direct answer to a question about religion (e.g., “That’s a person worshipping God,” “That’s a cross upside down,” “He [Jesus] rose from the dead”). Religious knowledge also included information concerning violence and death if it was related to religion, but not to satanism (e.g., “Jesus was killed,” “bad people killed God”). Statements were coded as “nonreligious-precursor knowledge” if any of the following were referenced: violence (e.g., “Freddie kills,” and “they hurt people”), destruction (e.g., “vandals”), supernatural events and beings (e.g., “magic,” “ghosts,” “crypts,” and “vampires”), or frightening events or people (e.g., “scary music” and “bad people”). Statements were coded as “satanic knowledge” if they included a direct or indirect reference to satanism; for example, “that [Jewish] star is a satanic symbol” (even though this statement is factually incorrect); “make blood paintings [to worship the devil];” “that’s a pentagram;” and “they’re devil worshipers [pointing to graveyard with robed figures scene].” Finally, statements were coded as “satanic ritual child abuse knowledge” if an explicit reference was made to physical or sexual abuse involving children and satanic rituals (e.g., “Have baby and kill it and wear signs of the devil”). Only information concerning satanic child abuse was classified in the final category. The other three categories contain idea units that concern violence, abuse, and worship activities but do not specifically relate to satanic child abuse *per se*. For example, a child who said that “those people are killing the baby” when asked to tell a story about the graveyard worship scene, but who did not relate the killing to satanism received one scored unit of nonsatanic-precursor knowledge for mentioning the killing of a child. Likewise, a child who stated that a person would make “blood paintings” to worship the devil, but who did not mention any abuse or violence in connection with the blood, received satanic knowledge scores for satanic worship and blood paintings but not for direct knowledge of satanic child abuse. Thus, statements about aspects and features sometimes associated with ritual allegations, but that did not in and of themselves constitute satanic child abuse, were coded as either religious, nonreligious-precursor, or satanic knowledge.

Data from 12 children, representative of each age and religion, were scored independently by two research assistants. Proportion of agreement was .85. Each assistant scored the remaining children’s interviews, and discrepancies were discussed and resolved. We created composite scores

Table 1. Mean Composite Abstractness Scores for Each Age and Religious Group

Religion	Age (in Years)				<i>M</i>
	3 to 4	7 to 8	11 to 12	15 to 16	
Catholic	.54 (.40)	.91 (.09)	.94 (.07)	1.17 (.17)	.89 (.32)
Protestant	.39 (.10)	.77 (.28)	.94 (.07)	1.02 (.20)	.78 (.29)
<i>M</i>	.47 _a (.29)	.84 _b (.19)	.94 _{bc} (.07)	1.09 _c (.19)	

Note. Higher values indicate more abstractness. Standard deviations in parentheses. Means in a row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .01$ in planned comparisons, all $F_s(1, 39) > 9.37$.

to use as dependent measures by separately summing the number of idea units coded in each of the three knowledge categories (i.e., religious, nonreligious-precursor, and satanic knowledge). Composite scores were not created for satanic ritual child abuse knowledge because only one subject provided such statements (see below).

Preliminary Analyses

Four separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted with child gender as the independent variable and mean scores for abstractness, religious knowledge, nonreligious-precursor knowledge, and satanic knowledge as dependent measures. Because no significant effects emerged, $F_s(1, 46) \leq .71$, $ps > .05$, data were collapsed across gender for all remaining analyses.

Effects of Age and Religion

Abstractness (section 1 of the CKQ). To test for differences in children's understanding of religious concepts as a function of child age and religion, a 4 (age group: 3- to 4-year-olds, 7- to 8-year-olds, 11- to 12-year-olds, or 15- to 16-year-olds) \times 2 (religion: Catholic or Protestant) ANOVA was conducted with children's abstractness scores as the dependent measure (see Table 1). The main effect of religion only approached significance, $F(1, 39) = 3.76$, $p = .06$, and the interaction effect was not significant, $F(3, 39) = 1.00$. However, as expected, there was a reliable effect of child age, $F(3, 39) = 21.15$, $p < .001$. Planned comparisons indicated that 3- to 4-year-olds' responses to questions about religious and satanic concepts were significantly less sophisticated than the responses of all three older groups of children, and 7- to 8-year-olds' responses were less abstract than the responses of 15- to 16-year-old children. Differences between 7- to 8- and 11- to 12-year-olds and between 11- to 12- and 15- to 16-year-olds were not significant. To illustrate the developmental changes in the sophistication of children's religious knowledge, when asked the question, "Who is the devil?," a few 3-year-olds said, "Jesus," and a 7-year-old said, "I don't know. I've heard his name hundreds of times, but I don't know who he is." A 12-year-old gave a correct, but concrete answer, when he responded, "He [the devil] was an angel who disobeyed God." And a 16-year-old demonstrated more abstractness by saying, "The counter force of God."

Knowledge (sections 2-5 of the CKQ). Next, three separate 4 (age) \times 2 (religion) ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether age or religion affected children's religious, nonreligious-precursor, and satanic knowledge (see Table 2). Across these three analyses, there were no significant main effects of religion, all $F_s(1, 40) \leq 2.29$, $ps > .05$, nor significant interactions between age and religion, all $F_s(3, 40) \leq .77$, $ps > .05$. One main effect of religion approached significance, indicating that Catholic children provided somewhat more nonreligious-precursor knowledge than did Protestant children, $F(1, 39) = 3.56$, $p = .07$.

As expected, significant age effects emerged for each type of knowledge, all $F_s(3, 40) > 8.97$,

Table 2. Children's Mean Knowledge Scores for Each Age and Religious Group

Religion	Age (in Years)				<i>M</i>
	3 to 4	7 to 8	11 to 12	15 to 16	
Religious Knowledge					
Catholic	6.50	18.00	21.67	30.67	19.21
Protestant	6.17	19.17	25.83	33.00	21.04
<i>M</i>	6.33 _a	18.58 _b	23.75 _b	31.83 _c	
Nonreligious-precursor Knowledge					
Catholic	5.17	11.67	14.33	17.17	12.08
Protestant	4.17	11.87	12.00	11.33	9.83
<i>M</i>	4.67 _a	11.75 _b	13.17 _b	14.25 _b	
Satanic Knowledge					
Catholic	2.83	8.00	11.33	26.33	12.12
Protestant	1.33	7.50	16.83	35.67	12.83
<i>M</i>	2.08 _a	7.75 _a	14.08 _b	26.00 _c	

Note. Higher values indicate more knowledge. Means in a row that do not share subscripts differ at the $p < .05$ in planned comparisons, all $F_s(1, 40) \geq 4.30$.

$p_s < .001$. Planned comparisons revealed that 3- to 4-year-olds evidenced significantly less religious knowledge than did children in the three older age groups, and 15- to 16-year-olds provided significantly more religious knowledge than did children in the three younger age groups. Seven to 8-year-olds and 11- to 12-year-olds did not differ reliably. Planned comparisons considering children's nonreligious-precursor knowledge revealed only one significant difference: The youngest children provided less precursor knowledge than each of the older age groups. Finally, comparisons of satanic knowledge scores indicated that, although scores of 3- to 4- and 7- to 8-year-olds did not differ significantly from one another, children in these two age groups exhibited significantly less satanic knowledge than 11- to 12- and 15- to 16-year-olds. In addition, 11- to 12-year-olds provided significantly less satanic information than 15- to 16-year-olds did. As illustrated in Table 2, young children generally revealed very little satanic information during the interview, about two statements per child. Only one child demonstrated arguably clear knowledge of satanic ritual child abuse, which precluded statistical analysis of that knowledge category.

It is important to illustrate the specific nature of children's knowledge at various ages. The response indicative of satanic ritual abuse knowledge came from a 16-year-old girl in answer to our question, "A man and woman decide that they are going to worship the devil. What bad things would they do?" (from Section 4 of the CKQ). The 16-year-old girl said, "Have sex if unmarried, kill people, steal, cheat, lie, have sacrifice with living animals, have baby and kill it, and wear signs of the devil." Although this girl did not explicitly say that sexual abuse occurred, she incorporated many other characteristics of ritual abuse claims including sexual activities and child murder.

When asked what one might do to worship the devil (Section 4 of the CKQ), a number of 7- to 8-year-olds and 11- to 12-year-olds responded by talking about "doing bad things" such as vandalism, stealing, fighting, and lying. The 11- to 12-year-olds' responses were similar to the 7- to 8-year-olds' responses, only more graphic: For example, an 11-year-old boy said, "Burn lambs or something, burn stuff, sacrifice stuff." The oldest children's responses were even more descriptive, as is evident in this 16-year-old's response: "Kill people, drink their blood, perform living sacrifice with animals, steal, and worship the devil." Another relevant statement, one that came close to a satanic ritual child abuse response, also came from a 16-year-old girl, who stated, "Through cults or sacrifice, or this sounds really weird, but I've heard like sexual experimentation and I've heard of sacrificing humans or sometimes like cats, dogs, or small animals and things like that." All of these responses were coded as revealing satanic knowledge. Note that since no mention was made of children, these responses were not classified as satanic ritual child abuse.

Concerning responses to the media section of the CKQ (Section 2), none of the youngest children knew about the satanic referents of heavy metal album covers. A few of the 7- and 8-year-olds described the type of music as "mean songs," "bad songs," or "weird songs." When shown the album cover for the group Incubus (a cover displaying a robed ghost-like figure standing by a cross in what appears to be a graveyard) and asked, "What sorts of songs do these people sing?" a few 7- to 8-year-olds said that the music was "wicked" and one said, "very evil, bad songs." The 11- to 12- and 15- to 16-year-olds were much more likely to know that certain musicians' albums contained satanic undertones. Interestingly, the 11- and 12-year-olds were more likely to say these groups played devil music, whereas the 15- and 16-year-olds were more likely to label the music "heavy metal," despite saying the album cover showed something satanic. Most children, even the oldest, had not seen many of the movies that dealt with satanic themes (e.g., *Angel Heart*). The most common satanic knowledge gleaned from children in response to questions about movies and television shows was that the movie "The Exorcist" dealt with devil possession. But many children mentioned that they had seen satanic symbols and learned about some aspects of satanic worship, such as animal sacrifices, from television talk shows.

None of the 3- to 4- or 7- to 8-year-olds could identify the satanic symbols that we showed them in Section 3 of the CKQ. In fact, when shown the inverted cross, one 3-year-old thought it was a sword and another thought it was a bench to sit on. Many young children did not differentiate the inverted cross from an upright one. The closest report of a satanic symbol from a child in these age groups came from a 7-year-old girl who spontaneously drew a Nazi swastika stating that it was a satanic symbol. The 11- to 12-year-olds began to evidence knowledge of satanic symbols, such as 666 and inverted pentagrams, although a few thought the Star of David was a satanic symbol. However, most of the 15- to 16-year-olds recognized satanic symbols (e.g., 666), and many indicated that they had seen the symbols in movies and on television.

Although the youngest children had little satanic knowledge specifically, responses to pictures in Section 5 of the CKQ revealed that they tended to know something about violence, ghosts, witches, and skeletons. The 7- to 8-year-olds were also sometimes able to provide information about Satan, vandalism, torture, and killings, and the 11- to 12-year-olds illustrated some cursory knowledge of demonic possession. For example, after being shown the picture of the tempting devil, one 11-year-old said, "He was getting possessed by the devil." Many 11- to 12-year-olds also verbalized associations between satanic influence and cemeteries, black souls, the dark side, and evil spirits.

To summarize, our results indicate that age is a powerful predictor of the abstractness and extent of children's statements about God, the devil, heaven, hell, angels, and witches. With age, children's understanding of religious figures and concepts became more sophisticated, and children revealed more religious, nonreligious-precursor, and satanic knowledge. There was an especially marked difference in the knowledge of the youngest children we tested (3- to 4-year-olds) and children in the other age groups. Religion (Catholic or Protestant) was not a reliable predictor of children's responses.

Effects of Family Religiosity

Our second hypothesis was that parent/family religiosity would be related to children's knowledge. First, to confirm that more religious families (as measured by McIntosh et al.'s [1993] child and parent religiosity scales) engaged in more religious behavior than less religious families, correlations were computed among the following variables: children's religiosity, parents' religiosity, children's frequency of attending religious services, parents' frequency of attending religious services, whether children attended parochial schools, whether religious symbols were displayed in the home, and scores on the FES moral-religious subscale. As expected, increases in parents' self-reported religiosity were related to increases in children's religiosity, frequency of religious

Table 3. Correlations Among Knowledge Scores, Children's and Parents' Religiosity, and Children's Media Exposure Scores (With Age Partialled)

Religiosity and Media Predictors	Measures of Religious Knowledge			
	Abstractness	Religious Knowledge	Nonreligious-precursor Knowledge	Satanic Knowledge
Children's Religiosity (43)	.07	.14	-.20	.07
Parents' Religiosity (43)	-.07	.08	-.44**	.14
Parental Church Attendance (42)	.07	-.10	-.24	-.08
Children's Church Attendance (42)	.04	.00	-.17	-.20
Children's Parochial School Attendance (34)	.12	.10	-.03	-.16
FES Moral-religious Subscale Score (35)	.01	.24	-.29*	-.22
Religious Media Exposure (43)	-.02	-.12	.04	.07
Supernatural/Horror Media Exposure (43)	.01	-.24*	.28*	.12
Satanic Media Exposure (43)	.08	-.01	.19	.27*

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p < .001$, one-tail.

Note. Higher values indicate more knowledge, more religiosity, more religious familial attitudes (FES), and more exposure. Higher values also indicated that a child attended parochial school rather than public school. Degrees of freedom are located in parentheses.

service attendance for both parents and children, and likelihood of children attending parochial schools $r_s \geq .49$, $p_s < .01$, n_s range from 43 to 46. In addition, increases in parents' religiosity were significantly associated with higher FES subscale scores, $r = .48$, $p < .01$, $n = 37$. Home display of religious symbols was not significantly related to the other variables, $r_s \leq .24$, n_s range from 37 to 46, and will not be considered further.

Next, as a test of our second hypothesis, we computed one-tailed correlations of our family religiosity measures (measures of children's and parents' religiosity, measures of children's and parents' religious-service attendance, and FES moral-religious subscale scores) with children's abstractness and knowledge scores (from the CKQ). Because there were developmental differences in abstractness and knowledge, we partialled the effects of children's age for these correlations (see Table 3). With only two exceptions, there were no significant correlations between the religiosity measures and the abstractness or amount of children's knowledge. One significant correlation indicated that increases in parents' religiosity were associated with decreases in children's nonreligious-precursor knowledge. This was in the opposite direction of our prediction. The other significant correlation emerged between children's FES moral-religious scores and their nonreligious-precursor knowledge, indicating that higher FES scores were associated with less nonreligious-precursor knowledge. Arguably, these could reflect chance findings.

Thus, our results suggest that family religiosity, at least as reported by parents, has a negligible effect on children's religious and satanic knowledge, although family religiosity appears to be inversely related to nonreligious-precursor knowledge. Regarding satanic and religious knowledge, children may be more influenced by other sources such as peer groups, school environment, or the media. We discuss the possibility of the latter influence next.

Effects of Media Exposure

Our third hypothesis was that increased media exposure would result in increased religion-related knowledge. Our measure of media exposure was computed from the parent-completed Media Exposure Questionnaire. Specifically, the number of items within each media category (religious, supernatural/horror, and satanic) to which children had been exposed were summed such that each child received separate exposure scores for each category. We conducted one-tailed correlations, with age partialled, between the abstractness and knowledge variables and the exposure scores (see Table 3). The results revealed partial confirmation of our prediction: Children

who had seen more horror and supernatural programs evidenced greater nonreligious-precursor knowledge and less religious knowledge than children who had seen fewer programs. Further, children's satanic media exposure scores were positively related to their satanic knowledge. This is consistent with the possibility that at least some of children's satanic knowledge was obtained from various television shows, movies, and music, rather than from parental influence or religious teachings.

We also investigated the relation between children's media exposure and child and family characteristics. Specifically, correlations with age partialled were computed between children's media exposure and the following variables: CBCL score, FES moral-religious subscale score, and children's and parents' religiosity. First, contrary to popular speculation that exposure to rock music and satanic media leads to problem behaviors in children, children's CBCL scores (internalizing, externalizing, and total scores) were not significantly related to how much religious, supernatural/horror, and satanic media they had seen, r_s ranged from $-.19$ to $.26$, $p_s > .05$, $n_s = 46$. Nor were there any significant relations between children's media exposure and moral and religious family functioning (as measured by the FES), r_s ranged from $-.23$ to $.19$, $n_s = 37$; or parents' religiosity, r_s ranged from $-.13$ to $.08$, $n_s = 46$. However, children's religiosity was significantly and inversely related to their exposure to supernatural and horror media, $r = -.30$, $p < .05$, $n = 46$. Specifically, more religious children had not seen as many of these types of media as had less religious children. As previously discussed, increased exposure to supernatural and horror media was predictive of greater nonreligious-precursor knowledge and less religious knowledge. It may be that children's religiosity partially determines the types of media to which they are exposed which, in turn, affects their knowledge.

Finally, to assess the relative effects of children's age, parents' and children's religiosity, and media exposure on the level of sophistication and amount of children's religious knowledge, correlations were computed between children's age and their abstractness and knowledge scores with each of the following partialled separately: children's religiosity scores; parents' religiosity scores; and children's religious media, supernatural/horror media, and satanic media exposure scores. All correlations remained significant such that increases in children's age were predictive of increases in the abstractness of children's responses and greater amounts of knowledge, $r_s \geq .35$, $p_s < .025$, $n_s = 46$. Thus, age was the major contributing factor to differences in children's understanding of religious concepts and how much knowledge they revealed.

DISCUSSION

Age and Religious Knowledge

Our research represents one of the first empirical investigations of the development of children's knowledge of negative religious, including satanic, concepts, figures, and practices. Consistent with developmental theory (e.g., Bucher, 1991; Piaget, 1929), we found that children's religious understanding became more abstract with age. The 3- to 4-year-olds often erred in basic religious information: latter elementary school children gave simple, literal responses typical of Harms' (1944) "realism" stage. Teenagers gave more abstract responses: however, even the oldest children provided responses that were scored, on average, at the concrete-correct level. Such responses are consistent with traditional, fundamentalist religious teachings and literal interpretations of the *Bible*. Had we included adults from traditional religious backgrounds, they might have scored no higher than these teenagers. We can speculate that children and adults who are more concrete versus abstract in their conceptualizations of religious information might be more likely to believe in the reality of Satan and satanic cult abuse, and in turn, find it more plausible that they themselves were victims of ritual abuse if it were suggested to them.

Children's media exposure was predictive of their knowledge. Children who had seen more satanic movies or heard more heavy metal music revealed greater amounts of satanic knowledge than children who had seen or heard less of these types of media. Also, children who had been exposed to a greater number of supernatural and horror movies and television shows evidenced more nonreligious-precursor but less religious knowledge than children who had been exposed to fewer supernatural and horror programs. Interestingly, children's religiosity was negatively related to the number of supernatural/horror media to which they had been exposed. Although we may speculate that more religious children choose to view less of these types of media, we must consider another possibility: Both children's religiosity and media exposure scores were obtained from parental reports rather than from children's own reports. It may be that parents' perceptions of or control over their children's religiosity may affect the types of media that parents allow their children to view. Importantly, however, certain types of media appear to provide some information to children that, if disclosed in certain contexts, could serve as precursors to ritual claims and facilitate a ritual investigation (e.g., Jenkins & Maier-Katkin, 1991). Even so, contrary to speculation that satanic images displayed in music lead to increased ritual abuse knowledge in children, in our study, when presented with various heavy metal album covers (many with overt satanic themes), none of the 3- to 4-year-olds and only a few 7- to 8-year-olds knew that the albums contained satanic referents.

Implications for the Validity of Ritual Abuse Claims

Our findings suggest that, at least until adolescence, the knowledge children obtain from their religious training, their families, and the media does not appear to be sufficient to allow them to concoct elaborate claims of satanic child abuse on their own. Pre-adolescent children have relatively little direct knowledge of information typically included in allegations of satanic child abuse. Even so, many children do have knowledge of satanism, the occult, and violence more generally. Although knowledge increases reliably with age, even young children possess some knowledge relevant to ritual abuse allegations. It is possible that this knowledge could lead children to make statements that an adult might interpret as the basis of a ritual abuse allegation, particularly if the questioner were unaware of conditions under which children are suggestible, or if he or she believed that ritual abuse happens and is common. For example, even some 3-year-olds associated violence, murder, and death with the devil (knowledge precursory to ritual abuse allegations). One stated, in 3-year-old terms, that the devil might tempt a person to "stick pins and needles in them, no needles, bit someone else, stab a knife in them, get blood out of them, put from back Play-Doh, and put napkin on their back, and eat them." When asked what bad thing might be happening in the picture of robed figures in a graveyard, one 7-year-old girl said, "They're trying to kill that little boy in the fire." Thus, children can reveal substantial knowledge about violence, abuse, and evil activities when prompted in a specific manner, even if they lack full understanding of the implications of the information they are providing. Such statements may prompt a concerned parent, therapist, or forensic interviewer to probe for ritual abuse details, and perhaps in turn create a false report.

It has been argued that children generally lack ritual abuse knowledge and, therefore, that allegations involving bizarre or extreme violence or occult elements must actually have been experienced (Jonker & Jonker-Bakker, 1991). Our results both confirm and challenge that conclusion. In confirmation, most children in the present study lacked explicit knowledge of satanic ritual abuse. However, in challenge to the above conclusion, many children revealed knowledge of violence and the occult that could serve as a starting point from which ritual claims could develop. Older children in particular evidenced considerable satanic knowledge, including knowledge of activities peripherally related to satanic ritual abuse, such as blood drinking, animal and human sacrifices, and satanic symbols. It is important for investigators to know that children can have this

knowledge without direct experience and to be wary of attaching too much significance to it. An important and ethically challenging area worthy of future investigation concerns what sorts of precursory knowledge and what questioning techniques are more or less likely to lead to ritual claims.

Promoting false claims, even false details of otherwise true reports of child sexual abuse, can produce dangerous outcomes, such as the discrediting of actual child abuse victims and false accusations about innocent persons. Public attention to false claims of ritual abuse has already contributed to a backlash against real victims and against child advocacy efforts generally (Bottoms & Davis, *in press*). Understanding the origin of bizarre and possibly false details in abuse claims is thus a step toward recognizing and supporting real victims of abuse.

CAVEATS

We acknowledge several limitations on the generalizability of our results. First, some children may have failed to reveal all they actually knew about satanic ritual abuse due to social desirability concerns. Adolescent children are especially hesitant to reveal to adults their full range of knowledge about issues related to sex and illegal activities (Alexander, Somerfield, Ensminger, Johnson, & Kim, 1993; McClary & Lubin, 1985). Similarly, our adolescent participants may have answered questions in a way that underestimated their full satanic ritual abuse knowledge.

Second, most children in our sample were middle-class Caucasians, and all were either Protestant or Catholic. Children from different socioeconomic, ethnic, or religious backgrounds may vary from our sample in terms of religiosity, media exposure, and knowledge. We found that middle class children from more mainstream religions had not gained a significant amount of detailed knowledge of ritual abuse from their familial and religious environments. But it remains for future research to assess the generalizability of these results by comparing our findings with those from studies of other groups of children. It is reasonable to predict, for example, that children from Fundamentalist Christian families will have more knowledge than children from other families, given the nature of their churches' teachings. In at least one child abuse case involving ritual allegations in Thurston County, Washington, the alleged victims were from a fundamentalist family and first revealed their abuse after participation in a church revival camp (Wright, 1994).

Finally, we did not ask participants directly what they knew about ritual abuse and related topics because, for ethical reasons, we did not want to provide new satanic ritual abuse information to children. Instead, we probed for children's knowledge indirectly, through questions about heaven, hell, God, music, movies, television shows, symbols, and pictures. Had we questioned children in a more straightforward manner, we might have uncovered more knowledge. Nevertheless, many of our stimuli, such as the record albums, movies, questions about worshipping Satan, and the TAT-like picture scenes in particular were quite explicit. It seems likely that these cues would have elicited ritual knowledge if children possessed it.

CONCLUSION

Our research suggests that many children have knowledge of Satan, but that few have specific knowledge of satanic ritual abuse. Even so, many children have knowledge of features precursory to ritual abuse claims. We have pointed out the implications of these results for understanding both: (a) children's allegations of ritual abuse; and (b) children's emerging understanding of religion, especially negative concepts such as Satan and hell. We hope our findings will be of use to professionals who investigate and treat children who claim to have been abused as well as

developmentalists and religion scholars concerned with understanding children's religious knowledge.

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RÉSUMÉ

But: Les buts de cette étude ont été d'examiner l'étendue des connaissances religieuses, et plus particulièrement sataniques des enfants et de comprendre l'influence de l'âge, la formation religieuse, la famille et l'exposition aux médias sur cette connaissance.

Méthodes: Quarante huit enfants âgés de 3 à 16 ans ont été interrogés en utilisant un entretien structuré évaluant leur connaissance (a) de la religion et des pratiques religieuses (b) des symboles et images liés à la religion; et (c) des films, musiques et shows télévisés à thèmes religieux et d'horreur.

Résultats: Même si peu d'enfants reconnaissent avoir une connaissance directe des abus rituels, beaucoup ont révélé une connaissance générale du satanisme et des rituels sataniques. La connaissance religieuse des enfants augmente et se précise avec l'âge. L'exposition élevée aux médias d'horreur non-sataniques était associée à plus de connaissance non-religieuse, qui pouvait être considérée comme un précurseur de la connaissance satanique tandis que l'exposition élevée aux médias sataniques était associée à plus de connaissance du satanisme.

Conclusions: Nos résultats suggèrent que les enfants ne connaissent généralement pas suffisamment l'abus satanique rituel pour effectuer de faux signalements. Cependant, beaucoup d'enfants savent que le satanisme existe et connaissent des formes de violence, de mort et d'activités illégales non-religieuses. Il est possible qu'une telle connaissance puisse entraîner une enquête d'abus satanique rituel ou puisse servir comme point d'engrègement à partir duquel un signalement est construit.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: La primera meta de este estudio era examinar el nivel de conocimiento religioso, especialmente de tipo satánico, de los niños. La segunda meta es entender la influencia de la edad del niño, la formación religiosa, el tipo de familia y la exposición a los medios de comunicación, en dicho conocimiento religioso.

Método: Utilizando una entrevista estructurada, 48 niños de 3 a 16 años fueron preguntados sobre su conocimiento de (a) la religión y el culto religioso, (b) los símbolos y los cuadros relacionados con la religión, y (c) las películas, música y espectáculos de televisión con temas religiosos y de terror.

Resultados: A pesar de que pocos niños evidenciaron un conocimiento directo del abuso de tipo ritual, muchos relevaron un conocimiento general del satanismo y del culto satánico. En los niños de mayor edad aumenta el conocimiento religioso y se hace más sofisticado. Un aumento en la exposición de los niños a información de los medios de comunicación de tipo terrorífico pero no satánico estaba asociado con más conocimiento de tipo no religioso, que pudiera ser considerado como precursor del conocimiento de tipo satánico. Un aumento en la exposición a información de los medios sobre cuestiones de tipo satánico, estaba asociado con un mayor conocimiento de cuestiones relacionadas con el satanismo.

Conclusiones: Nuestros resultados sugieren que los niños no poseen en general suficiente conocimiento del abuso por ritual satánico, que les pudiera permitir hacer falsas acusaciones por sí mismos. Sin embargo, muchos niños tienen conocimiento del satanismo así como conocimiento de tipo no religioso sobre la violencia, la muerte y actividades ilegales. Es posible que tal conocimiento pueda impulsar a realizar una investigación sobre el ritual de tipo satánico o que posiblemente sirva como un punto de inicio a partir del cual se desarrolle una acusación.

APPENDIX A

MEDIA EXPOSURE CHECKLIST

Religious media

Grinch Who Stole Christmas (movie)
 Greatest Story Ever Told (movie)
 Ten Commandments (movie)
 Mohammed, Messenger of God (movie)
 Janet Peerce with the Camerata Singers, Rosh Hashanah (music)
 Melvin Williams (music)
 Walt Whitman and the Soul Children of Chicago (music)
 The Cathedral Quartet (music)

Supernatural/horror media

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (television)
 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (movie: I to II)
 Freddie's Nightmares (television)
 Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey (movie)
 Halloween (movie: I to V)
 Ghostbusters (movie: I to II)
 Psycho (movie: I to III)
 Batman (television)

Satanic media

Exorcist (movie)
 Angel Heart (movie)
 Poltergeist II (movie)
 The Seventh Sign (movie)
 Warlock (movie)
 Incubus (music)
 Ozzy Osbourne (music)
 Enigma (music)
 Testament (music)
 Slayer (music)
 Vile Vibes (music)

Neutral/children's media

Full House (television)
 The Cosby Show (television)
 Lady and the Tramp (movie)
 Janet Jackson (music)
 Vanilla Ice (music)

APPENDIX B

CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE

I. General Knowledge Questions

- A. Heaven Where is heaven?
 Who lives there?
 What do they do there?
 How do you get there?
- B. Hell Where is hell?
 Who lives there?
 What do they do there?
 How do you get there?
- C. God Who is God?
 What does God do?
 Where does God live?
 Is God a person like you or me?
- D. Devil Who is the Devil?
 What does the devil do?
 Where does the devil live?
 Is the devil a person like you or me?
- E. Witches What does a witch do?
 Where does a witch live?
 Is a witch a person like you or me?
- F. Angels Who are angels?
 What do angels do?
 Where do angels live?
 Are angels people like you or me?

II. Media identification

- A. Movies and television shows
1. Religious (Grinch who Stole Christmas, Greatest Story Ever Told, Ten Commandments)
 2. Neither religious nor satanic shows and Children's shows (Home Alone, Full House, The Simpsons, The Burbs)
 3. Horror (Psycho I-III, Halloween, Nightmare on Elm Street I-V)
 4. Satanic (e.g., The Seventh Sign, Angel Heart, Warlock, Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey, Exorcist)

For each, the following questions are asked:

- Have you ever seen the show _____?
 if yes: What is _____ about?
 if no: Do you know what _____ is about?

B. Music

1. Religious (Jan Peerce with the Camerata Singers, Walt Whitman and the Soul Children of Chicago, Melvin Williams, Cathedral Quartet, Mohammed, Messenger of God)
2. Neither religious nor satanic and children's music (Lady and the Tramp, Vanilla Ice, Janet Jackson, Batman soundtrack, Ghostbusters soundtrack)
3. Heavy Metal (Ozzy Osbourne, Enigma, Vile Vibes, Incubus, Slayer, Testament, Nightmare on Elm Street IV soundtrack, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles soundtrack)

For each, the following questions are asked:

- What does this cover show?
 What sorts of songs are on this album?

III. Object and symbol identification

- A. Religious (Christian all-seeing eye, Christian cross, Star of David, Menorah)
- B. Neither religious nor satanic (e.g., smiley face, peace symbol)
- C. Satanic (e.g., inverted pentagram, inverted Christian cross, Sign of Nero from Book of Revelations [666])

For each, the following questions are asked:

- Do you know what this picture is?
 if yes: What is it?
 Where have you seen this before?
 if no: What do you think it might be?
 Where do you think you might see something like this?

IV. "What if?" questions

- A. God
 1. What would a person do to worship God?
 2. What would a person do if God tells him/her to do really good things?
- B. The devil
 1. What would a person do to worship the devil?
 2. What would a person do if the devil tempts him/her to do really bad things?

V. Picture scenes (Emotional valence of picture is in parentheses.)

- A. What's happening in this picture?
 1. Religious scenes
 - a. Noah with animals (positive)
 - b. angel standing with a man and animals (positive)
 - c. crucifixion (negative)
 - d. Jewish family at a meal (positive)
 2. Neutral scenes
 - a. woman carrying a basket to market (positive),
 - b. young girls with dogs (positive)
 - c. children picking apples (positive)
 3. Satanic scenes
 - a. boy in ring of candles with goat's head (negative)
 - b. hooded figures in graveyard (negative)
 - c. robed figures with covered table (negative)
 - d. devil talking to woman (negative)
- B. Some kids thought that something good/bad was happening in this picture. What do you think that could be?
 1. Picture-congruent condition: good and bad prompts congruent with mood of picture scene
 2. Picture-incongruent condition: good and bad prompts incongruent with or opposite the mood of the picture.