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# Modern history of child sexual abuse awareness: Cycles of discovery and suppression

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### Abstract

In the last century and a half, public and professional awareness of sexual abuse has emerged and been suppressed repeatedly. The 20th-century suppression of the problem has been linked to Freudianism, sexual modernism, and gender politics. Recent awareness of sexual abuse differs from awareness in the past because of the significant amount of current research attesting to the prevalence of sexual abuse and its injurious impact on human development. However, in the contemporary mental health professions, the courts, and the media, there has emerged an influential backlash against the latest discovery of child sexual victimization that utilizes arguments employed during earlier periods of suppression. Knowledge of the earlier cycles of discovery and suppression can assist professionals in understanding and countering present attempts to deny or minimize the problem of child sexual abuse.

## Résumé

Depuis le milieu du siècle dernier, à tour de rôle on a reconnu, puis nié le phénomène des abus sexuels. Au vingtième siècle, ce sont les influences de Freud, du modernisme sexuel et de la pensée sexiste qui ont été à l'origine du refus de se rendre à l'évidence. Aujourd'hui, la reconnaissance du phénomène diffère de celle du siècle passé en ce qu'elle s'appuie de données scientifiques sur la prévalence et les ravages du problème. Toutefois, il se trouve dans les médias, les tribunaux et le domaine de la santé mentale, des mouvements de ressac qui ressemblent aux arguments invoqués au siècle dernier pour supprimer la reconnaissance du problème. Mieux connaître ces cycles de reconnaissance et de suppression des temps passés pourra servir aux professionnels à mieux comprendre et mieux contrer les arguments courants qui veulent minimiser ou nier l'existence de la problématique des abus sexuels des enfants.

## Resumen

En el último siglo y medio, la conciencia pública y profesional sobre el abuso sexual aparece y es reprimida repetidas veces. La supresión de este problema en el Siglo XX ha sido asociada con el Freudianismo, modernismo sexual y la política sobre los sexos. La conciencia presente sobre el abuso sexual difiere de la conciencia que existía en el pasado por la cantidad significativa de investigaciones recientes que comprueban la prevalencia del abuso sexual y su impacto injurioso en el desarrollo humano. Sin embargo, en las profesiones de salud mental contemporáneas, las cortes y los medios de comunicación, ha surgido una fuerte reacción en contra de los últimos descubrimientos sobre la victimización sexual de los niños que usa argumentos utilizados durante períodos anteriores de supresión. El conocimiento de ciclos anteriores de hallazgos y supresión pueden ayudar a los profesionales a entender y contrarrestar los intentos actuales por negar o minimizar el problema del abuso sexual en los niños.



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## Keywords

Child sexual abuse history; Incest awareness

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