### Current Study
- Analyzed 42 available files of priests in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee who were accused of sexual assault.
- Attempted to find what were the most frequently used techniques of neutralization used by the priests when confronted with allegation.
- Techniques of neutralization are used by individuals in order to justify their illegitimate actions (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

### Techniques of Neutralization
- **Denial of Responsibility**
  - Offender claims that what they did was not their fault.
- **Denial of Injury**
  - Offender insists that their actions did not cause harm.
- **Denial of Victim**
  - Offender states that the victim was deserving of offense.
- **Condemnation of Condemners**
  - Offender places negative images on accusers.
- **Appeal to Higher Loyalties**
  - Offender believes that their offense is ultimately not bad given the circumstances.

### Research Methods
- **Content Analysis**
  - 42 of 42 available priest files.
  - 4,228 pages of documentation.
  - Statements that justified/neutralized behavior.
  - Direct statements from accused priests (main focus of research).
  - Indirect statements made by priests, according to other documentation.

### Description of the Sample
- **42 Priests with File**
  - Fully Restricted: 24 (57%)
  - Laicized: 15 (35.7%)
  - Dead: 22 (52.4%)
- **20 Files with Direct Statements**
  - Fully Restricted: 13 (65%)
  - Laicized: 10 (50%)
  - Dead: 6 (30%)
  - Number of Assignments: 6 (average)
  - Range of assignments: 1-11

### Findings: Denial of Responsibility
- 39 statements from 14 priests
  - "With my orientation, the frequent presence of teenage boys in the house at night was tantalizing, to say the least." – Priest in a letter to the Archbishop.
  - "It has been many years since I was made vulnerable by my drinking, and I have repented, cried, prayed for forgiveness." – Priest in a letter to the Archbishop.

### Findings: Condemnation of the Condemners
- 37 statements from 7 priests
  - "I cannot believe that the Archdiocese can be so unjust... I deserve more compassion and consideration." – Priest in a letter to the Auxiliary Bishop.
  - "Their whole approach to my interview with them was a source of entrapment... (they) put words into my mouth I had never said." – Priest in a letter to the Archbishop.

### Findings: Denial of Injury
- 16 statements from 11 priests
  - "I bumped into sites that I wasn’t looking for, all billed as legal." – Priest reflecting on his crime.
  - "My crime, a misdemeanor, is not the end of the world... Worse things have happened and are happening." – Priest reflecting on his crime.

### Findings: Appeal to Higher Loyalties
- 4 statements from 3 priests (in reference to aftermath, not accusation)
  - "I have discouraged suggestions of petitions or phone campaigns or groups going to the Chancery on my behalf because I’ve felt this should be settled in the Canonical process." – Priest in a letter to Archbishop.
  - "I joyfully await eternal justice... Whatever the results of this, I entrust my future to the just and loving God of us all." – Priest in a letter to the Auxiliary Bishop.

### Findings: Denial of Victim
- 16 statements from 6 priests
  - "This was all at the hands of a six-time criminal." – Priest in a letter to the Pope.
  - "My accuser is far sicker than I ever imagine." – Priest in a letter to a priest.

### Discussion
- 12 Different combinations of the techniques were used (1 priest using multiple techniques).
- The lack of personal accountability appeared frequently throughout the personnel files.
- Lack of legal accountability gave way to a lack of personal accountability.

### Continued Research
- We have started a content analysis of priest files from Chicago (n=30) and Los Angeles (n=128).
- It is expected that several dioceses will release files in the near future.