
Sexual Abuse in the Church

By Kaitlyn Goffin

HBSE- Research Day

Why I chose this Topic

- I am passionate about sexual abuse awareness.
- I am curious as to know why rates of sexual abuse are so high in the church.
- Clergy Sexual Abuse has happened to a family member.

What I Did

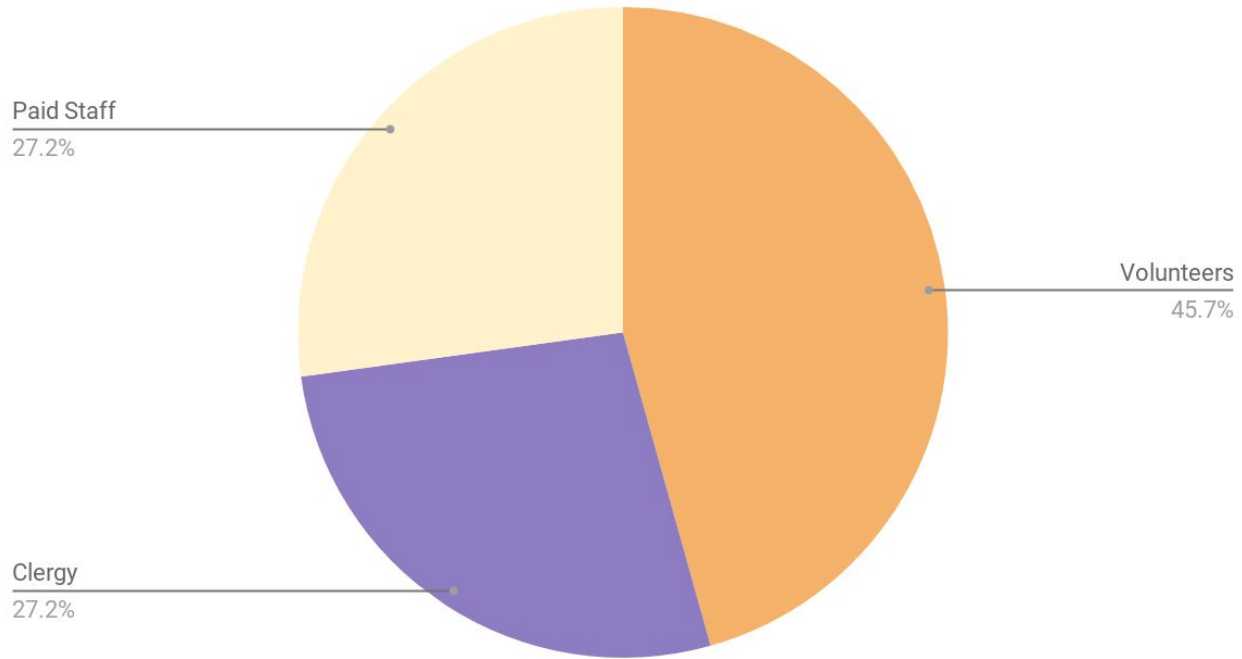
- I met with a Research Coach.
- Read a variety of Journals and Studies all on the topic of Sexual Abuse in the Church.
- Used information from Southern's Sex Abuse, Awareness and Prevention Class
- Key Words: Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Clergy Misconduct, Christian Culture, Church

Why this Topic is Important

- It's a prevent issue
 - average of 70 allegations of clergy sexual abuse per week.
- The first reported incident of abuse for the majority of priests occurred many years into ministry, an average of 11 years post ordination.
- Approximately only 10% of instances were reported to the church within 1 year of the occurrence.

Statistics from Pennsylvania State University

Abuse Statistics



How Clergy Misconduct Happens: Baylor University

Purpose: Discover themes of sexual abuse in the church

Qualitative Study

- Over 40 participants
- All participants were abused by a clergy member or spouses of abused individuals
- Results were conducted by survey and interviews

Findings

- “Grooming techniques” as well as gradual “boundary crossing” occurs
- Often just moved to other churches
- Victims blame themselves and are often the ones to leave the community.
- “Culture of Niceness”
 - American culture emphasises being nice. This leads to overlooking or ignoring behaviors of others we know to be inappropriate rather than risking embarrassment of the pastor
- Overlapping multiple roles
 - More than 50% of the offenders studied were both counselors and religious leaders, family friends, and confidants, and over half of the victims were seeing their pastor for counseling services.

Power

Baylor Study

- They go unsupervised by others
- They have power and knowledge about members of their congregation, often intimate knowledge
- They have power of access and accessibility

Ecclesiastical Law Journal

- A significant dimension of the pastoral relationship is the inequality of power (Blake 2010)
- Ministers are at most risk when they minimise or ignore the magnitude of their power (Blake 2010)

Commonalities between Perpetrators: Cynthia Calkins, Ph.D

- Case Control Study that focused on evaluating over 1000 Catholic Clergy
- Evaluated home life, dating histories, and sexual abuse theories

They did this by surveying 4 groups

- clergy who had sexually abused children
- clergy referred to treatment for inappropriate but non-criminal sexual behavior with adults
- clergy referred to treatment for general clinical problems
- clergy having no previously identified clinical or sexual issues

Findings

- Clergy accused of sexual abuse were 7 times more likely to have been sexually abused
- They lack intimate relationships with adults when compared to the studies control group.
 - Fewer dating partners than the control group
- They were judged by clinical staff as relating poorly to children 64.5%
- 86.5% worked with children in a counselling role.

Role Identity Theory

Role Identity: How people make meaning of their role and identity

- Role identity helps explain how pastors see themselves as different from their congregants and how they minimize or deny the problems in their lives (Pooler, 2011)
- Pastors fill many roles rolls (Pooler, 2011)
- The idealized pressure put on pastors can put him/her at risk for burnout, distress, and even sexual misconduct (Katsavdakis, 2004)
- Seeking help becomes incoherent to their “more than human” role. (Pooler, 2011)

Institutional Loyalties: University of Queensland

Social Identity Theory: People are motivated to believe the groups they are apart of are good and worthy of pride

- Failure to report child abuse is due to many reasons but one of the main is due to uncertainty that the abuse is real.
- Catholic Christians were more likely than Non- Christians to question the credibility of the accuser and to to defend Clergy.
- Highly identified group members were the least willing to believe accusations.

Education

This journal explores Sexuality, Misconduct, and education in the Methodist Church

- “With the exception of teaching that sexual intercourse belongs only in a heterosexual marriage, the majority of U.S faith communities are mostly silent about the broader dimensions of sexuality”
- “Professional Ethics is not a required portion of continuing education in most Christian denominations.”
- “Equally important is educating laity in healthy interpersonal boundaries in ministry”

“Sex and the Church”: Sexuality, Misconduct, and Education in Methodism

Lack of Regulations

- The North American Division of the Adventist Church does not require screening for volunteers
 - “This can’t happen here” attitude
 - Trust
 - Fear of embarrassment

Conclusion

Further Study/Limitations:

- Limited amount of research on protestant churches
- Many abuse incidents are not reported, so we have no idea how large this issue is.

This research is still extremely valuable in order to make change!

Sources

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- Dr. Tyon's Research Presentation

Any Questions?