AN ANALYSIS OF CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE; A COMPARISON OF CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT RESPONSES TO THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

by

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The purpose of this study was to provide a comparison analysis regarding the issues of clergy sexual abuse. The analysis involved comparing the views of 290 conference participants in the cities of Los Angeles, St. Louis and Philadelphia to the current literature on clergy sexual abuse. Through this comparison, conclusions were reached leading to expanded insight regarding the effect of clergy sexual abuse on the offender, the victim and the parish. Recommendations were provided for appropriate parish and church-wide response to clergy sexual abuse.
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Sexual abuse and exploitation has become an epidemic crisis in societies around the world. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1996) over 80,000 charges of sexual abuse against children are reported each year in the United States. Reporting rates suggest that less than 7% of child or adult sexual assaults were ever reported. It is thought by some that the actual number of assaults may be from 2 to 20 times greater than the number of assaults reported by authorities. The lifetime probability of sexual assault for women is 50% (Karcher and Long, 1991).

The current sexual abuse of children has caught the public eye. One study revealed that a child molester will commit 281 assaults against 150 victims outside the family (Karcher and Long, 1991). The fact that sexual abuse creates difficult psychological problems is well documented in the literature. Bass and Davis (1988) chronicle cases of sexual abuse that had triggered dissociative responses, panic attacks, low self esteem, self hatred, somatic illnesses, feelings of powerlessness, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships.

When sexual abuse is enacted by a member of the clergy, the effects of the abuse is further complicated and even more devastating. Fr. Stephen Rosetti (1995) writes that adults sexually abused as children by Catholic priests reported significantly less trust in the Catholic priesthood and Church, and in their relationship to God. Barbara McLaughlin (1994) discusses the added numinous dimension that is attached to the role of clergy. She underscores
that to the parishioner, the minister is a representative of God. He represents the Church who is representative of God. The applied impact is that the minister equals God. Many abused parishioners stop attending church altogether. To frequent the place where the trauma occurred, would mean to risk the possibility of revictimization all over again! Many clergy abuse victims feel betrayed and abandoned by church and God (McLaughlin, 1994).

Sexual exploitation and violation of sexual boundaries by clergy is a critical problem within the Church today. Recently, in the city of Chicago, 54 Catholic priests were banned from their pastoral roles because of sexual misconduct with children (Carnes, 1994). A priest in Minnesota has had over 240 victims come forward accusing him of sexual misconduct with children. He was eventually convicted and sentenced to twenty years in prison for indecent assault, battery, sodomy and unnatural acts upon scores of Catholic children (Kaiser, 1996).

Protestant and Jewish congregations have also suffered devastating stories of sexual transgressions. The most blatant have been televangelists whose careers and empires have crumbled because of sexual improprieties (Ostling, 1988). Revelations continue to surface about compulsive prostitution, affairs with pastoral counseling clients, and celibate clergy living double lives of public abstinence and private relationships (Sipe, 1994). As the revelation of new cases of clergy sexual abuse continue to appear, it is apparent that something is very wrong and has been for a long time.

This is not a problem confined to America. The problem of clergy sexual abuse has greatly impacted European countries as well. Ireland has been particularly rocked by scandals, leading one British journalist to write, “It is now virtually impossible to watch television or read a newspaper in Ireland without being confronted with the saga of the pedophile priest or hearing the sordid details of the latest sex scandal” (Independent, 1994, p.32). The case of

Britain has not been left unscathed. In August, 1995, an Anglican clergyman caused a scandal after he had been accused of having improper sexual relations with about 20 women followers. In Austria, the Archbishop of Vienna was forced to retire following allegations of sexual abuse of a minor 20 years previous. In the Netherlands, when Dutch Catholic television did a special on children sexually abused by priests in the United States, more than 200 Dutch victims called in with their own stories of molestation (Burkett and Bruni, 1993). The preponderance of evidence suggests that the tragedy of clergy sexual abuse is a world wide problem that has no national or denominational boundaries.

Until recently, the American Church has struggled to accept the truth of abuse by clergy in the Church. The initial reaction of religious institutions in the United States to this tragedy, especially Catholic and Protestant denominations, was one of denial and “cover up” (Kaiser, 1996). For years, rather than rooting out the abuse, church hierarchies across the nation would silence the problem by reassigning clerical offenders to new parishes, where they were free to continue their abusive practices. Victims were often discredited or sworn to secrecy.

In Protestant denominations, there has been a “boys will be boys” attitude toward ministers’ involvement with female parishioners, and congregations would often blame the victim for disrupting their church when charges of sexual exploitation came out into the open. There has also been repeated denial of child sexual abuse and other sexual deviations (Kaiser, 1996).
Recently there has been a marked change that has appeared in some denominations. Many religious leaders have taken action by implementing administrative policies against clergy sexual abuse. Workshops have been held to create awareness and to underline standards of professional conduct. Action teams have been formed to intervene when needed. There are many within the Church who are concerned but who need guidance. Various ministers shared requests for help around issues of policy development and practical methods in addressing the issue of clergy sexual malfeasance.

There has been a great need for a coordinated ecumenical effort to examine the pastoral role in sexual trauma. When a person has been betrayed by a member of the Church in a position of trust, authority and power, a safe environment must be provided for that person to tell what has happened. People who have been injured have every right to expect that they will be given attention and care, and that justice will be done (Maris and Hopkins, 1993). The hierarchy of the Church must be committed to an appropriate process of truth-telling and purge existing denial and minimization of the abuse. The offending clergy person must face the consequences of abusive actions through honest and open self-disclosure. When offenders can be rehabilitated, it must include restitution and the recovery of community trust whenever possible. Congregations that have experienced sexual misconduct by a clergy person are severely traumatized congregations. Congregational healing involves truth-telling and breaking the silence. People cannot begin to process their feelings about what happened, if they do not know what happened.

In 1995, the Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute (ISTI) conducted a needs assessment of the problem of clergy sexual abuse by organizing three listening seminars in Los Angeles, California, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and St. Louis, Missouri. There were 290 participants
plus ISTI board members. The goal of the seminars was to document what was really happening in the churches and synagogues across the country. Gathered at each seminar site were data from a questionnaire which provided participant understanding and opinions about the nature and the impact of clergy sexual abuse. From their understanding, the participants prioritized treatment goals for primary victims, the broader congregation, and the clergy offender.

This study is an attempt by the researcher to (1) analyze the collected data from the three listening conferences and (2) review relevant literature with respect to identifying the problem of clergy sexual abuse and creating a program to treat the problem in the future. This included an analysis of the findings to better identify the problem in its early stages in order to effectively treat the victim and the perpetrator and eliminate possible factors that contribute to the problem.

The following definitions of selected terms are used throughout this paper:

Celibacy - A sacred vow of sexual and marriage abstinence taken by any clergy person such as the priesthood of the Catholic Church.

Clergy - A group ordained to perform pastoral functions in a Christian church, also a minister.

Clergy Sexual Abuse (C. S. A.) - sexual abuse enacted by a member of the Christian clergy.

Clitoridectomy - an ancient custom of surgically removing the clitoris from females. This custom practiced mostly by Muslims but also by some Christians and animists.

Denial - a refusal to admit the truth or reality. Used in this paper to identify a major challenge within the hierarchy of the Church.

Fiduciary responsibility - refers to the responsibility of sacred trust and confidence invested in one person by another when the one individual needs aid, advice, or protection from that person. Example: the fiduciary relationship between pastor to parishioner.

Full disclosure - refers to the concept of revealing completely any and all transgressions committed by a clergy person against a parishioner. The purpose of full disclosure is for healing and justice making.
Incest - generally defined as sexual intercourse between people too closely related to legally marry (usually interpreted to mean father/daughter, mother/son, or brother/sister).

Judicatory officials - referring to the policy making and enforcement level of church leadership at a regional level.

Minister - One who is ordained to perform pastoral functions in a Christian church, also known as clergy.

Molestation - referring to sexual advances made against the will of an individual. Mutual consent demands that the individual must be free to consent, be legally competent, be informed and be able to comprehend the information that is given to him. Whenever this is not true and sexual advances are made, sexual molestation occurs.

Numinous Dimension - refers to the divine, the holy, the mysterious. In context to the Church, the term refers to the clergy person who represents not only a profession but also God.

Paraphilia - characterized by recurrent intense sexual urges and sexually arousing fantasies lasting at least six months and involving (1) nonhuman objects, (2) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one’s partner (not merely simulated), or (3) children or other nonconsenting people. In addition, the person has acted upon these urges or is markedly distressed by them.

Parish - an ecclesiastical unit or area committed to one pastor, may be congregation or local church.

Parishioner - a member of a parish or congregation.

Pedophile - a person having recurrent intense sexual urges and sexually arousing fantasies involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children that the individual has acted upon or finds distressing.

Perpetrator - one who initiates unwelcomed sexual advances to an unwilling party.

Phallometric Testing - assesses male genital arousal in response to stimuli depicting a variety of sexual acts or “objects” of each gender at various ages.

Sexual Exploitation - refers to sexual contact bearing the following characteristics: (1) It violates traditional and expected roles. (2) There is a power differential between the participants. (3) Mutual consent is impossible. (4) It violates anticipated goals of the victim.
An avalanche of tragic stories have been reported in the media regarding the sordid details of sexual abuse by clergy in the church. In March, 1987, Jim Bakker resigned his powerful TV ministry after disclosing that he had an affair some seven years previously. Less than a year later, Jimmy Swaggert, who was a part of the initial investigation of Bakker, also admitted to sexual misconduct and resigned his ministry (Ostling, 1988). Stories like this have created an intense focus on the concern of sexual contact between pastor and parishioner.

Clergy sexual abuse is a shocking reality that creates a serious problem for the church. In treating the concern of sexual abuse, it is important to consider a broad perspective regarding the impact of sex in the parish. In order to understand the nature of clergy sexual abuse, it is important to examine the possibility of positive aspects of sexual expression in the parish.

In “Office Romance: Love, Power, and Sex in the Workplace”, Lisa Mainiero (1989) presents the possibility that sexual relating among coworkers who are not in hierarchical relationship as potentially positive. She states that among the benefits can be increased teamwork, softened interpersonal conflicts and increased productivity. Since the church is a workplace, it is important to explore the potential benefits when pastors and parishioners experience sexual interest.
In a survey sent to clergy, Lebacqz and Barton (1991) posed the question, “Is there a positive role for sexual awareness or energy within a congregation?” (p. 94). Results from the survey indicated that respondents reflected a certain sense of ambiguity about sexual energy in the church. Some pastors found sexuality both potentially a great gift and a great danger. These pastors saw sexual energy as a power that could work for good and express important parts of who we are as children of God, but also a power that could easily run amok or create problems (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991).

Yet, for all the ambiguity involved in sexuality, most pastors saw at least some positive role for sexual awareness and energy in the church. Rebecca Parker (1988) argues that sexual intimacy can be a means of grace, a resource for healing and transformation in our lives. She contends that sexuality serves at least three functions that connect it with spirituality and grace. First, it gives us a profound sense of our communion with all of life. Sexual intimacy can be described in terms of mystical communion. Second, it also heightens our sense of personal presence and power. In the giving and receiving of sexual joy is found relational power. Third, there is a strong connection between sexual pleasure and creativity. Sexuality is connected, perhaps especially for women, with being ripe, fertile, full of energy, and alive.

Sexuality expresses our wholeness as people, it relates us to others, it is a place for the expression of love, and it is an embodiment of the desire for union with God. Thus, sexuality and spirituality are linked (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991).

Parker (1988) states that sexual intimacy is not the “be all and end all” of human life. But it has the potential for “undergirding all that is good, and joyful in our lives” (p. 10).

The Catholic Theological Society of America declares that “sexuality is the Creator’s ingenious way of calling people constantly out of themselves into relationship with others
(Lebacqz & Barton, 1991). The emphasis of this statement is upon sexuality as providing a bonding or a communion and therefore contributing to the fullness of life.

At its best, sexuality fosters creativity, enables growth, and moves toward integration, wholeness, and integrity in human life. It can help us to overcome our alienation from one another, it builds trust, it moves us toward “an eagerness for the freeing growth of the other” (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991, p. 84).

However, sexual energy within the church can have a definite destructive undertow. Unethical sexual conduct by clergy seriously harms congregants who experience it. It divides congregations and destroys their trust. It damages the reputation of the clergy. Discovered or undiscovered, it takes its toll on the clergy person’s family and the minister. An attempt will be made by this researcher to examine the negative impact of clergy sexual abuse.

Marie Fortune (1989) argues that healthy sexual contact requires mutuality and consent, and that gaps in the power between pastor and parishioner render consent invalid. Sexual contact between professional and client, including clergy and parishioner, is problematic because the power of the professional undermines consent.

Peter Rutter (1989) argues that sexual contact between a professional in a position of trust and client violates a “forbidden zone.” His argument is based not on consent per se, but on an understanding of the centrality of trust to the professional relationship. While there is a slight difference in emphasis between Fortune’s work and Rutter’s, both locate the problem squarely in the professional role. It is this emphasis that constitutes a framework for understanding why sexual contact between pastor and parishioner is generally wrong. Within this framework, it is important to understand the impact of power and vulnerability on matters
of consent, the significance of the trust required in the professional role, and the special
vulnerability that attaches to sexuality in our cultural setting.

In the Christian tradition, any sexual contact that is morally acceptable must be loving.
And to be loving, it must be genuinely consensual. This basic principle is articulated in both
Protestant and Catholic sexual ethics. The United Church of Christ (U.C.C.) declared in its
preliminary study on human sexuality that “sexual acts that are characterized by loving motives
and intentions will exclude all acts that are coercive, debasing, harmful, or cruel to another”
(UCC, 1977). Similarly, the Catholic Theological Society of America argues that God’s gift of
sexuality has been “seriously abused” wherever “sexual contact becomes personally frustrating
and self-destructive, manipulative and enslaving of others, deceitful and dishonest” (Kosnik,
1977, p. 85).

Fortune cites the prerequisites of consent to be equal power, full knowledge, and
freedom. In the arena of professional ethics in medicine, valid consent is understood to
require four components (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991). Each of these is applicable as well to the
question of sexual contact between pastor and parishioner.

The first requirement for valid consent is that the person be “informed”. In the
medical context, this refers primarily to being informed of the risks of any procedure proposed.
In the pastor-parishioner context, it would mean being informed of risks and not being
deceived or having important information withheld. Therefore, deceitful or dishonest sexual
contact is not ethical.

The second requirement for valid consent is that the person consenting must
comprehend the information given. It is not enough to be told of the risks. The person must
have some understanding of what the risks mean, so that he or she can make decisions based
on them. Therefore, those with diminished mental capacity who cannot process and utilize
information are by definition not able to give a valid consent.

The third requirement for consent to be valid is that the person must be legally
competent to give consent. Children, by definition, are not legally competent to give consent
to risky medical procedures. Therefore, all sexual relations between a pastor and a child would
be, by definition, unethical, since the child cannot legally give consent for such relations.

The fourth requirement for consent to be valid is that the person giving consent must
truly be free to consent. Valid consent requires that both parties not only be informed and
knowledgeable about relevant risks but also and above all be free to consent.

Pastors have power as professionals. If the pastor is male and the parishioner female,
then he has the power of men in a sexist society. Consequently, there is a power gap between
pastor and parishioner. This power gap undermines the validity of consent because it means
that the two parties do not come as equals.

The power of the pastor and the vulnerability of the parishioner undermine the
mutuality needed for genuine, valid consent to engage in sexual relations. Thus, there is good
reason to question whether consent to engage in sexual relations is ever valid when such
relations are between a pastor and a parishioner (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991).

In short, it is the power of the pastoral role that makes the difference for sexual ethics.
Morey (1988) states that sexual abuse by pastors exhibits the same dynamic as incestuous
abuse, which takes place within the context of an intimate relationship (family, church, or
counseling) between an authoritative person (a relative or minister) and a person who is
vulnerable to and trusting of that power (a child or counselee).
The pastor has power not only as a professional person, but as an ordained person. The pastor has a numinous dimension. The numinous dimension refers to the divine, the holy, the mysterious. It is the numinous dimension that contributes to the “pedestal effect” in the ministry. It is in this context that the clergy person represents not only a profession but also God.

Sex has been problematic for the Church throughout the ages. In two thousand years no Christian church has developed a theology of sexuality. That is, no one has developed an overarching, comprehensive, and integrative understanding of the nature and place of sexuality within the scheme of salvation and a theological system (Sipe, 1994). The ramifications of this problem have impacted the history of abused children.

Adequate parenting is a late historical achievement. Most countries in the world continue to severely abuse children today. Even in America, about half of all children are sexually molested, and the rates are even higher in non-Western nations (deMause, 1994). deMause contends that the further back in history one goes—and the further away from the West one gets—the more likely children are to have been killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused by their caretakers.

Sexual abuse of children is evidenced throughout the world. In America, the most accurate scientific studies, based on lengthy interviews, report that 30% of men and 40% of women remember having been sexually molested during childhood—defining “molestation” as actual genital contact, not just exposure. About half of these are directly incestuous with the immediate family, the other half being with neighbors, but with the complicity of caretakers in at least 80% of the cases (deMause, 1994).
Other Western nations report similar statistics. A recent Canadian study by Gallup of 2,000 adults has produced incidence rates almost exactly the same as those found in the United States. Latin American sexual activity is considered even more widespread. A recent BBC “ChildWatch” program asked its female listeners if they remembered sexual molestation. Of those surveyed, 83% remembered someone touching their genitals, 62% recalled actual intercourse. A recent German survey has been conducted asking school children about their sexual experiences; 80% reported having been molested (deMause, 1994).

Outside the West, the sexual molestation of children is a routine practice in most families. Childhood in China has historically had the same institutionalized rape rituals as in India, including child concubinage, the castration of boys to be used sexually as eunuchs, marriage of young girls to a number of brothers, and the regular sexual use of child servants and slaves. Childhood in contemporary Japan, although somewhat more Western than that of other Eastern nations, still includes masturbation by mothers “to put them to sleep.” The sexual use of children in the Near East is as widespread as in the Far East. Historically, all the institutionalized forms of pedophilia that were customary in the Far East are documented extensively for the Near East (deMause, 1994).

A recent survey of Egyptian girls and women showed 97% of uneducated families and 66% of educated families still practiced clitoridectomy. The United Nations’ reports estimate that more than 74 million females have been mutilated, with “more female children mutilated today than throughout history” (deMause, 1994).

The sexual use of children has been well documented since the time historical records began. For example, the Greek and Roman child lived his or her earliest years in an
atmosphere of sexual abuse. Girls were commonly raped, as reflected in many comedies that have scenes that are supposed to be funny of little girls being raped (deMause, 1994).

The impact of sexual abuse has been well chronicled. Profound trauma is often the result of those individuals who have the misfortune of being sexually abused. Jan Hindman (1989) writes about nine severe trauma factors that affect those who are abused sexually:

1. Sexual Responsiveness: Individuals who have been severely traumatized seemed to be extremely pained in describing their sexual responsiveness. The stimulation or pleasure received from the experience seems overwhelming and is a tremendous source of trauma. What appears to be a tragic effect of the most severely traumatized victims is that because of their sexual responsiveness, many victims manifest signs of continued arousal toward either the perpetrator or to the kinds of activities that took place during the sexual abuse. It seems to be a deadly combination for the horrors of abuse to be remembered, but with the additional trauma of arousal to those horrors.

2. Terror: Many severely traumatized sexual victims experienced vivid examples of terror building activities. In general, a major traumatization factor involves the victim having to wait for the abuse or situations where the victim was involved in ritualistic behaviors that seemed to create painful and degrading anticipation. Clinical impressions suggest that the amount of time between when the abuse was anticipated by the victim and when the abuse occurred seemed to be a major factor in traumatizing the victim (Hindman, 1989).

3. Distorted Offender I.D.: This concept is related to the clear identification of the offender behavior. Confusion about the offender/victim role is extreme, especially in cases where the sexual offender was important to the victim or held extremely positive attributes in the victim’s eyes. Sex offenders who were highly respected in the community or are important
to the victim’s non-offending parents or siblings seem to have their identity as a perpetrator blurred to the victim.

(4) Distorted Victim I.D.: This concept applies to the confusion about the victim’s role as innocent. If the perpetrator cannot take on the characteristics of being responsible and guilty, then oftentimes the victim takes on these characteristics. Making the victim feel like a partner is a common way sex offenders enhance the victim’s guilt and blame. The confusion amounts to the victim feeling much more like a partner than an innocent party deserving of protection.

(5) Under Age Twelve: The issue with this trauma factor is not so much the age but what happens to the child’s development during the years following the abuse. This category in Hindman’s study points out that the most significant factor seems to be that children who were severely traumatized by sexual abuse proceeded through childhood without assistance or rescue.

(6) Footprints: This concept relates to the response of the victim to the sexual abuse. In general, victims respond to their abuse much the same as sex offenders. It is common for sex offenders to deny, rationalize, minimize and rearrange facts in a psychological process to avoid looking at the reality of the crime they committed. Victims go through much of the same process, but for a different reason (Hindman, 1989). Common victim coping skills include amnesia and dissociation. Amnesia is the most profound form of denial (Cameron, 1990). Amnesia places the victim in an out of control situation without the ability to understand the feelings that seem to be manifested at inappropriate and unusual times in adulthood.
Dissociation is another kind of memory footprint used by victims who cannot put the pieces together, who cannot cope with the incongruity of sexual abuse. Amnesia and dissociation make victims vulnerable to memory zaps throughout the rest of their lives giving them no cognitive awareness for many of their affective responses to the memories (Hindman, 1989).

It was common for severely traumatized sexual abuse victims who were not plagued with amnesia to cope through manifestations of guilt and responsibility. The result was self-abusive cycles beginning in early childhood and most often continuing through adulthood.

(7) Secrecy: When victims do not report their sexual abuse in childhood, they spend most of their lives suffering in silence. Severely traumatized victims use the vehicle of sexual abuse to carry them through childhood development. The damage to these victims is the influence that deviancy and sexually abusive perceptions have on the foundation of development.

(8) Disclosure Disaster: Even though some victims will report the abuse, the response to the disclosure seemed to add trauma rather than assist in the healing process. Disclosure usually resulted in more abuse, beatings, institutionalization, or total family abandonment (Hindman, 1989).

(9) Trauma Bond: Severely traumatized victims of sexual abuse often have continued demands for a relationship with the perpetrator or those significant to the perpetrator. This will often require the victim to struggle in an attempt to resolve the abuse and feelings about the perpetrator, even though in some cases physical or actual contact with the perpetrator was not a factor.
Without question the impact of sexual abuse upon the victim is traumatic. Hindman’s nine factors (Hindman, 1989) in evaluating the impact of sexual abuse is helpful in understanding factors that separate those devastated by sexual abuse from those who miraculously survived.

Stephen Rosetti (1995) notes that religious organizations would do well to notice the religious and spiritual damage to victims caused by child sexual abuse, especially when the perpetrator is one of their own church leaders. Rosetti’s study unearths data to support his hypothesis that victims who had been in psychotherapy would express less trust in God, Church and priesthood compared to those who had not been in therapy. The literature suggest that it may be due to victims becoming more conscious of their abuse and the trauma that it caused.

A. W. Sipe (1994) reports that throughout its history, the church has failed to recognize the problem of sexual abuse. In June of 1993, the Vatican issued statements to the effect that “the real culprit is a sexually over-stimulated culture”. The Vatican response intimated that the malady was uniquely assigned to a twentieth century phenomenon primarily germane to an American society ravaged by the perils of materialism (p. 132).

History conflicts with this pronouncement. The Council of Elvira in 309 is the oldest canonical record we have from the early Church. Of its 81 canons, 38, or nearly half, have to do with sexuality. Although women are singled out for the majority and receive the harshest of judgments, the canons also render judgment on “men who sexually abuse boys “ (canon 71), “bishops, priests and deacons…. discovered to be sexual offenders” (canon 75). All of these were to receive the harshest punishment of exclusion from the community and refusal of communion even at the time of death ( Sipe, 1994, p. 132).
Medieval and Renaissance accounts of sexual abuse by priests are numerous. Perhaps the most astounding is the case of Pope Julius III, elected in 1550. He presided over the session of the Reform Council of Trent from 1552 to 1554. He also picked up a 15-year-old boy from the streets of Parma, made him his lover, and eventually created him cardinal (Sipe, 1994).

The Church’s response to sexual abuse has been shrouded in denial. Minimization is not only a concern for the perpetrator (Jenkins-Hale, 1994), but it is also a well established pattern for the church. Offending clergy, have been allowed to transfer from one parish to the next or from one denomination to another, conveniently avoiding confrontation and consequences of their actions. For example, Burkett and Bruni (1993) report that in October of 1992, Father Daniel A. Calabrese was found guilty of sodomizing a minor in his rectory in Poughkeepsie, New York, and sentenced to ninety days in jail. After his sentencing, District Attorney William V. Grady publicly chastised New York Archbishop Cardinal John O’Connor for ignoring prior complaints concerning Calabrese’s inappropriate behavior and assigning him to run Duchess County’s Catholic Youth Organization (Sipe, 1994).

The church institutionally has often “shot the messenger.” Ralph Earle (1994) refers to a study of 300 pastors conducted by “Christianity Today” which reported that 23% of pastors in one survey admitted doing something with someone other than their spouse that they thought was sexually inappropriate. Earle (1994) also cites the results of a 1991 Fuller Institute of Church Growth study on clergy that indicated 37% of clergy questioned as having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior. Donald Clark (1993), a partner with a Chicago law firm, states: “The law is saying that if you know about abuse but do nothing about it, you are a complicit conspirator and will be held accountable as such” (p.62).
Jorgenson (1995) notes that courts are beginning to enforce strict sanction against professionals who overstep the bounds of the original common purpose of the relationship to unduly influence the trusting party to engage in potentially harmful conduct.

A fiduciary relationship exists when one person justifiably places confidence, faith, and reliance in another whose aid, advice, or protection is sought in some matter. The potential for professionals to abuse and overreach in fiduciary relationship is apparent. Accordingly, the law affords protections and privileges to the less powerful party. Fiduciaries owe special duties to their clients, including loyalty and good faith, due care, and full disclosure of all material facts.

The essence of a fiduciary relationship is that the parties do not deal on equal terms, because the person in whom trust and confidence is reposed and who accepts that trust and confidence is in a superior position to erect unique influence over the dependent party. Fortune (1989) argues that the pastor/parishioner relationship constitute a fiduciary responsibility.

Over the last few years, the church has paid out tens of millions of dollars in fines and settlements because of ministers who were inappropriately sexual with parishioners in their congregations (Chua-Eoan, 1994). A jury in Pennsylvania ruled that the Altoona-Johnstown diocese had to pay $1.57 million to a man who was sexually assaulted when he was a youngster by a local parish priest. The jury said the diocese was responsible because it deliberately ignored complaints of abuse (Chua-Eoan, 1994).

Denial is a fundamental defense mechanism that must be resolved in order to effectively treat victim and perpetrator. Loftus & Camargo (1993) warn that clergy who offend are often cunning and deceitful and have mastered the art of manipulation. The church can ill afford to become an accomplice to this tragedy by refusing to directly confront the issue of
sexual abuse. The Rev. Canice Connors, former director of the St. Luke Institute in Suitland, Maryland, states that there is a major dispute among the hierarchical leadership of the Catholic Church about whether or not sexual abuse really is a moral problem (Chua-Eoan, 1994). Dr. Gene Abel, a psychiatrist and specialist in the field of sex offender treatment, believes that until the Catholic Church understands that the issue is more than a violation of the celibate commitment, little will change (Chua-Eoan, 1994).

Lisa Cahill, professor of ethics at Boston College’s theology department believes that the missing piece is for the church to take responsibility as an institution (Chua-Eoan, 1994). She further intimates that much of the legal proceedings that have been taken against the church might be avoided if the church would take responsibility. In many cases, the mind-set of the church has been to determine, first, how to effectively respond to a lawsuit. The attempt has been to undermine the credibility of witnesses as opposed to really giving people a sense that they have been heard. Yet, the research suggests that it is recognition and validation of the abuse from the church in an immediate, honest way that victims need most. Oftentimes, the church’s response is litigious and defensive: “See my lawyer.” This attitude of response communicates belligerence to the victim who chooses to react through legal proceedings as their next option. Clearly, the denial of responsibility by the church has fueled an adversarial relationship that has been detrimental to resolution. Connors states “It’s the lie that is killing us. You can’t lie and expect change. This issue cannot thrive without secrecy” (Chua-Eoan, 1994, p. 56).

Hopkins (1993) notes that truth telling levels the playing field in the violation of power through sexual abuse. Resistance to truth telling may come from certain people in the congregation or church leaders. Those in the congregation who resist may have a variety of
motivations for doing so. Judicatory officials and their legal advisors are frequently difficult to convince that truth telling is essential. Judicatory officials often get pressure from offenders to keep things quiet. If they do not comprehend the damage this does to the primary and secondary victims, they may think that going public is not all that important and acquiesce to a request for silence. There is much confusion between the rights of privacy, the constraints of the confessional and need for confidentiality. Information that is always confidential is any formal clinical diagnosis of the offender. The identity of any victims will also be held in confidence. Those in authority who must investigate a case and discipline a clergyperson are advised to not take information under any kind of a confessional seal.

Hopkins and Maris (1993) cite that among the many needs that victims of clergy sexual abuse have, being believed, knowing that the abuse is not their fault, receiving an apology, and being considered courageous and not a troublemaker are paramount. By nature, the meeting of these needs augment for public disclosure of the abuse.

Within the context of the Roman Catholic Church, the issue of celibacy is a unique component that deserves consideration in terms of its role to the contribution of the dynamic of sexual abuse. Andrew Greeley, priest and sociologist from Chicago, says that “it is intellectually dishonest Catholic-bashing to blame celibacy for the problems of the church or the priesthood” (Greeley, 1993, p. 45). However, the preponderance of incidence presses the point for further consideration. To chide those who bravely explore all possibilities that might figure in the causation of sexual abuse among clergy constitutes a defensive posture that fuels the position of denial that the church has long maintained. It is valid to evaluate the psychosexual and emotional maturity of married and unmarried clergy, alike. Premature
conclusions made without carefully examining the research can be both irresponsible and ineffective in treating the problem.

A.W. Richard Sipe (1995), a psychiatrist and ex-priest, studied collected research from more than 1500 priests. The data were collected during the years 1960-1985. Classical and traditional literature about celibacy is fraught with presuppositions that a celibate regularly achieves the ideal. However, there is a large number of priests who frankly say, “I don’t think celibacy is possible” (p.122).

Valid data that describes the behavior of priests and celibacy will assist in the research of determining the role of celibacy to sexual abuse by clergy. From Sipe’s research, there is suggested that at any one time, 2% of vowed celibate clergy can be said to have achieved celibacy—that is, they have successfully negotiated each step of celibate development at the more or less appropriate stage and are characterologically so firmly established that their state is, for all intents and purposes, irreversible (Sipe, 1995). There is also a group of men, 8%, who, although their course of celibate practice has not been without its missteps and fumblings and, for some, serious reversals in the past, enjoy a present condition so refined and in which the practice of celibacy is so firmly established that the group can be said to have consolidated the practice of celibacy to such a degree that it approaches the ideal (Sipe, 1995).

In addition, Sipe’s research suggests that 40% of priests are at any one time practicing celibacy, that is, they are sexually abstinent by intent, and on a daily basis they operate realistically in ways that assure their active involvement in the process of celibacy. By Sipe’s research estimates, about 50% of the Roman Catholic priesthood are either practicing, consolidating or have achieved celibacy. He also contends that there are 20% who are actively involved in heterosexual relationships and behavior patterns, 8% are involved in sexual
experimentation, 10% are practicing homosexual behaviors, 1% participate in transvestism, 2%-6% are involved in pedophilia, and 5% experience chronic problematic masturbation issues (Sipe, 1995).

Greeley (1993) discounts Sipe’s conclusions about the emotional maturity of men in the priesthood. He states that “priests do not have the emotional maturity of 13-year olds, as Sipe argues” (p. 17). Yet, Sipe contends that the celibate/sexual system and the education of priests institutionalize and reward an adolescent level of adjustment. He argues that from his research samples, a solid number among the group of sexually abstinent are men whose personality structures have consolidated around a set of characteristics that can only be described as adolescent (Sipe, 1995).

A study of the psychological maturity of American priests published by the Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Spirituality supports concern about the emotional development of members of the priesthood:

A large proportion of American priests are underdeveloped psychologically. This does not mean that they are sick, but that their growth has been arrested. Generally they have not worked through the problems of intimacy, and their level of maturity is lower than their chronological age. They do not relate deeply or closely to other people …

As a matter of fact, however, the spiritual life of these priests is generally of a piece with their emotional arrest. Their faith tends to be superficial and not integrated into the rest of their lives. They tend to excuse themselves from the pain of the growing process into full maturity in Christ. The priesthood, the Church and the faith are used as screens and cover-ups for psychological inadequacy; religious ideals remain abstract and unactualized. (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1973, p. 3)

The data suggests that there are serious numbers of the priesthood who have violated the commitment to celibacy. It is not merely an American phenomenon. In a random sample study of stress on Catholic priests in South Africa, Father Victor Kotze (1991) found that
43.1% were involved in a friendship or love relationship and that 37.7% had terminated such a relationship within the previous 2 years. In 1994, he asserted that these relationships had all the qualities of sexual affairs (p.320).

There has been no serious challenge of similar estimates of American priests involvement with women. Whatever the number might be of priests in America who are involved in relationships with women, to be sure, women are abused in significant numbers by men who maintain their status and privilege within the celibate system while they relegate their women to the status of a backstreet wife (Sipe, 1995).

Even though there is a significant number of clergy of all faiths who have inappropriately crossed sexual boundaries, it is important to note that most clergy draw a clear distinction between being attracted to a parishioner and acting on that attraction. In one survey taken by Lebacqz and Barton (1991) of more than 50 pastors who said they had been attracted to a parishioner, only 6 moved into any kind of sexual involvement with that parishioner. While the typical pastor accepts the fact of attraction as a “given,” he or she also rejects the idea of acting on that attraction in anything other than honorable circumstances.

In the Lebacqz and Barton (1991) survey, it was discovered that for a number of clergy, it was a marriage commitment with its vows of fidelity and monogamy that would make a sexual encounter with a parishioner wrong. However, marriage covenants, as important as they are, are not sufficient guarantee against improper sexual relations. First, not all clergy are married. Second, not all clergy who are married experience joy in their marriages. Loneliness may contribute to their tendency to seek another relationship. And third, even the best of marriages does not keep people from falling in love or from acting out sexually.
Other reasons for not acting out in a relationship attraction included the concern that some felt sexual contact with parishioners is unprofessional. Fostering the parishioner's spiritual journey and maintaining trust in God was the reason for avoiding sexual contact. The purpose of the pastoral role centered in the nature of the church and the parishioners' spiritual needs, was another reason for avoiding sexual contact with parishioners. Yet another reason was the reality of past experiences of relationship pain that formed their sense of appropriate boundaries.

These pastors were clear on the limits they set but did not articulate the reasons for choosing those limits. It is almost as if simply understood the pastor-parishioner relationship is to be a "forbidden zone" in which there was no need to spell out the grounds for their caution. (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991).

Pastors who do not cross sexual boundaries have developed a homespun warning system about when they are in danger of crossing an inappropriate boundary. According to a survey taken by Lebacqz and Barton (1991) there were a number of self-designated warning signs that pastors utilized to prevent them from crossing boundaries. Included are (1) The "publicity" test: what would others think? (2) Physical arousal--one's own or the other's, (3) Inordinate sexual fantasy, (4) Sexual gestures or body language, (5) Sexual innuendo or verbal exchange, (6) Intuition, instinct, or not feeling right, (7) A desire to share intimacies that are not called for, (8) A parishioner wanting too much time or attention, (9) A desire to shift the focus to sexual subjects (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991).

Not all these signals function on the same level. Some are internal mechanisms for foreseeing trouble. Others are tests that can be used after an initial "feeling" alerts the pastor to the fact that something is wrong.
Most pastors depended upon internal criteria related to intuition, instinct, and feeling. Even those pastors who specify a list of verbal and nonverbal clues often trust their “instinct” to tell them when a touch is wrong or a word is inappropriate.

It is highly noteworthy that most pastors score high on the “feeling” category in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This personality inventory assesses the way people perceive and process input. Those who are “feeling” oriented (as opposed to “thinking” oriented) tend to trust not in argument but in inward signals as a mode of decision-making. In a recent study published by the Alban Institute, Roy Oswald and Otto Kroeger (1988) found that, of 1319 pastors studied, fully 68% fit the “feeling” oriented category. They found that not only are 68% (more than two-thirds) of pastors feeling oriented, but that 44% of pastors are both feeling oriented and “intuitional” (compared to only 12% of the general population).

The fact that feeling oriented intuition is a common approach among clergy and the probability that this style is a common fit for clergy personality types does not suggest that this method is a good mechanism for determining when boundaries are being reached. Intuition is not infallible. What is often called “instinct” is largely socially conditioned.

The Lebacqz & Barton research (1991) discovered that there was one response that was common among male pastors, but lacking among female pastors. It was the dependence on physical response and specifically on sexual arousal as a warning system. Several men said they knew they were approaching the limits of what is acceptable “when I sense sexual arousal in myself,” or “when I’m so sexually aroused that biologically I have a desire to move toward intercourse” (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991 p. 58).
The danger with relying so heavily on this warning system is that feelings can be distorted by living in a society that encourages addictive and co-dependent behavior so that something that is wrong can actually “feel” right (Lebacq & Barton, 1991).

Feelings can be used not only to set limits on intimacy, but also to encourage intimacy. Only when it can be known for sure that pastors are healthy, non-addictive people whose feelings and instincts do not reflect addictive patterns, would it be safe to trust feelings as a guide to ethical behavior. It is likely that most pastors are caught in an addictive system and therefore are not as much in touch with their true feelings as would be necessary in order to trust their intuitions.

In the studies of Chodorow (1978) and Nelson (1988), it is suggested that men are out of touch with their feelings and tend to genitalize emotion. The work of Schaef and Fassel (1988) suggests that it is risky to trust pastors’ feelings in terms of a warning system because typically pastors are caught in an addictive system in which it is likely that they exhibit codependent characteristics, including lack of contact with their own deep feelings.

In conclusion, while most pastors do not seem to become sexually involved with parishioners, there is an alarming rise in the numbers of those who do. The evidence is clear that while there are those pastors who have an adequate homespun warning system that serves them well and prevents them from crossing sexual boundaries, there is a growing number of clergy who do not have one and who do cross sexual boundaries.

In order to understand the nature of clergy sexual abuse, it is important to understand the role of the pastor. The role of the pastor is viewed as a public function. In the Lebacq and Barton (1991) survey pastors were asked if they thought that being in the pastoral role has
anything to do with deciding about appropriate sexual boundaries. The survey revealed that for many clergy, pastoral ethics was a matter of personal ethics.

Certainly the pastoral role is often evaluated by the quality of personal character and integrity shown by the clergy person. David Schuller (1980) found that across denominational lines, churches consistently seek pastors with primary attention to personal qualities. Four of the top five qualities sought in pastors had to do with matters of character. Yet, the role of pastoral ministry exposes the personal integrity of the minister to situational vulnerabilities more so than most professionals. In some ways the pastoral role can limit the freedom of the individual professional, while in other ways, the role greatly increases freedom.

Pastors are permitted a kind of intimacy that those in other roles might not be. Many pastors think that the role of pastor gives them more access and more freedom in relating to parishioners than they would otherwise have.

Marie Fortune (1989) states, “The pastoral role by its very nature gives the pastor access to people’s lives on a very immediate and intimate level” (p. 42). This level of intimacy in some ways means more freedom for pastors—more access to people, an ability to hug or kiss or provide friendly physical gestures to incarnate and symbolize their caring. If intimacy means closeness—being able to see, touch, and experience the other’s presence—then the pastoral role is intended to permit deep intimacy, for the pastor has access to the core of the other person—his or her soul (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991).

This very access and intimacy creates problems. People are vulnerable in crisis situations and can be easily led. Dangers are perceived from different views. The pastor can easily abuse the intimate setting. The very vulnerability of a female parishioner may in itself be arousing to a male pastor. Rutter (1989) suggests that “there is an intoxicating mixture of
timeless freedom and timeless danger in such encounters” (p. 112). Thus, caring and intimacy can easily lead the pastor into inappropriate sexual expressions.

The freedom brought about by the pastoral role, therefore, is seen by most pastors as necessitating limits on intimacy. What lies at the heart of this concern is the recognition that mutuality is missing in the pastor/parishioner relationship. The pastor has power, and the parishioner is vulnerable. The core of professional ethics lies in the recognition of this power imbalance between the pastor and the parishioner. It is this that makes sexual contact problematic.

Pastor and parishioner intimacy is not the “two-way street” that personal friendship or intimacy can be. The client can become dependent and the professional must be careful not to abuse the vulnerability of the client. For many pastors surveyed by Lebaqz & Barton (1991), it was trust that was the most important to not undermine in the pastor/parishioner relationship. For them, any behavior that undermined trust was wrong.

Some individuals compare clergy sexual abuse to family incest. Marie Forturne (1989) argues that because the church is often seen as a family, incest is indeed an appropriate model in this context. This incestuous quality is related to the numinous dimension of the pastoral role. It renders an imbalance of power in the relationship between pastor and parishioner.

Clergy sexual abuse is in essence an abuse of power. It is important to examine the nature of the abuse of power as it relates to sexual abuse in the Church. John Kenneth Galbraith (1983) describes the exercise of power as “someone or some group imposing its will and purpose on others, including on those who are reluctant or adverse” (p. 14).

Galbraith (1983) identifies three types of power. First, there is condign power. This type describes the submission to one's purpose(s) by inflicting or threatening some sort of
adverse consequence(s) should the other refuse to comply. An example would be a priest threatening to humiliate a child in public if the child does not participate in the sexual behavior the man has in mind. Second, he describes compensatory power which is demonstrated by offering an individual financial payment or some other sort of reward so that she or he forgoes pursuit of her or his own preference in order to obtain what is promised instead. For example, a minister desiring sexual compliance from a child may offer to take the child on a trip for an affirmative response. Third, he describes conditioned power which is exercised by changing someone’s beliefs. Through persuasion, education or exposure to prevailing social beliefs about what is natural, proper or right, the person becomes disposed to submit to the will of other(s). For example, a clergy person may persuasively teach the child that sexual actions are acts of love and that God will be pleased if the child shows love for the minister in this way.

Conditioning of parishioners is considered explicit when the individual’s belief (preference) is deliberately cultivated by the minister. On the other hand, when a preference is dictated by the culture, the conditioning is termed implicit (Galbraith, 1983). An example of implicit conditioning would be the conditioned belief that ministers--since they are good and holy men--deserve to be shown respectful subservience at all times (Gill, 1995).

The personality of the individual with power may include physical strength or size, together with qualities such as charm, kindness, interest, intelligence, humor and the ability to express thought in a compelling manner. All of these can be helpful in winning belief (i.e. conditioning) on the part of the child and thus setting the stage for successful sexual seduction. Through their well-developed personality, ministers can often exercise both the conditioned and condign forms of power (Gill, 1995).
Property can give the minister the possibility of purchasing submission through the use of compensatory power. Organization is generally established because an exercise of power is needed. Once an organization is functioning, it is capable of conditioning people to respond through persuasion. The Church as an organization has exercised condign, compensatory and conditioned forms of power. All of this power of the Church is often recognized as being vested in the pastor. Ministers have access to power that is at times compensatory, and at other times condign or conditioned. In other words, they can get what they want in many life situations simply because they are “men of the cloth,” which to their constituents implies special entitlement (Gill, 1995).

Understanding the characteristics of sex offense behavior is important to the treatment of the problem of clergy sex abuse in the church. A diagnosis of a paraphilia requires a drivenness, an internal push, reflected in high masturbation rates or partner-seeking behaviors, in addition to an unusual longstanding erotic imagery. A third characteristic, sexual dysfunction during conventional sexual behaviors, is often present as well. Paraphilia is a separate diagnosis from gender identity disorder and is not to be confused with homosexuality and bisexuality. Paraphilia may occur among the gender disordered and among those with any orientation (Levine, Risen, and Althof, 1994). Not all sex offenders qualify for the diagnosis of paraphilia. Incest, date rape, cross-dressing, and sexual harassment for example may occur in persons who do not meet the criteria for paraphilia. Many offenders are compulsive or driven in their pressure to behave sexually, but there is nothing unconventional about the accompanying eroticism or object choice.

There are often identifiable and predictable circumstances that surround the victims of sexual abuse and their families. Contributing factors to the sexual abuse of children are (a)
poor supervision, (b) poor choice of surrogate caretakers or babysitters, (c) inappropriate sleeping arrangements, (d) reversals of role boundaries, and (e) previous sexual abuse by a family member (Sgroi, 1982).

According to Geiser (1991), offenders usually fall into one of two categories: fixated or regressed. The fixated offender has been sexually attracted to children since adolescence. The typical regressed offender is the adult whose relationships are extremely complex, unsatisfying, stressful, or anxiety laden. Common to both fixated and regressed offenders are feelings of self-alienation and insecurity, despondency, rigidity, and a fear of being unable to function adequately in a heterosexual relationship (Panton, 1979).

According to Deisher (1982), the personality profiles of sexual abusers of children are marked by (a) aggression and the need to express personal power, (b) underdeveloped peer relationships, (c) social isolation, (d) feelings of inadequacy. Andersen and Shafer (1979), report that typically the offender has poor impulse control, expressed through acting-out behaviors and chemical abuse (drugs and alcohol). Poor judgment and failure to learn by experience are problems commonly found in molesters. Other characteristics of the offender are (a) repeated conflicts and the inability to work cooperatively with authority figures, (b) a predominance of physical rather than verbal expression of needs, (c) extensive use of manipulation to achieve satisfaction of needs, (d) callousness and narcissism, and (e) the inability to tolerate intimacy. Burgess, Groth, Holmstrom, and Sgroi (1983) add that offenders who are pedophiles are egocentric individuals who express an insufficient ability to tolerate frustration or to delay immediate gratification of needs and are plagued with low self esteem. They often feel little remorse, guilt, or shame and lack distress about their attraction to children.
There are additional components for consideration with the dynamics of incest. According to Taylor, (1986), the personality profile of the incestual father includes the situational themes of abandonment, loss of self esteem, insecurity, and inadequacy. They are prone to use escapist modes of stress management. They tend to be reactive to problems and stressors, have a fear of authority which leads them to be avoidant and/or compliant with authority figures, and gain compensatory power through control. Groth (1982) adds that incest offenders are "alexithymic"—that is, unable to experience or express age-appropriate emotions. Ingersoll and Patton (1990) add that incest fathers suffer from a variety of anger dysfunction and that all have problems of unresolved victimization.

Zuskin (1992) defines five factors that render a person susceptible to the sexual abuse of children: (1) predisposing, (2) precipitating, (3) instigating, (4) abuse, and (5) instrumental. Predisposing factors include factors that occur well in advance of abusive behavior. Included are life history events such as childhood sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, early life relationships involving extreme abuses of power and control, and early involvement in impulsive, compulsive and/or self-destructive behaviors.

Precipitating factors refer to the reality and psychological events which overwhelm the coping ability of a person susceptible to child sexual abuse. These factors involve identifiable environmental or psychological stressors such as marital discord, subordination in a relationship, financial stress, a sense of disintegration, and an increased reliance upon primitive defenses.

Instigating factors are psychological events which incite a regressed person susceptible to child sexual abuse into incestuous action. For some offenders these factors are experienced as a compelling explosion of abusive feelings and behaviors. For others, the experience is a
sequential building up of impulses. Instigating factors include contact with a child, mood factors such as time of day, music, obsessive and compulsive fantasies about the abuse, coupled with masturbation (Zuskin, 1992).

Abuse factors refer to the details of the abuse itself. These factors involve details related to the strategic planning of abuse, the location, the father’s thoughts, etc. Instrumental factors refer to the psychological effects which occur during or after incest and which serve to reinforce the likelihood of the recurrence of abusive behavior (Zuskin, 1992).

Brandon (1985) notes that the absolute percentages of incestuous fathers with a history of sexual victimization is not very high. Baker’s (1985) research concurs and suggests that there is much more to sexual abuse than simply “intergenerational transmission.” According to Brandon (1985), the rates of physical abuse in the backgrounds of incestuous fathers ran consistently higher than rates of sexual abuse.

Berkowitz (1983) found that incestuous fathers had significantly more themes of abandonment, powerlessness, maternal seduction, and paternal rejection. Parker & Parker (1986) agreed stating that in their sample study, 50% of incestuous fathers reported mistreatment by father compared to 30% mistreatment from mothers. Baker (1985) says that mistreatment, rejection, and abuse by parents seem to be more important contributing factors than simply parental absence.

Saunders, McClure, and Murphy (1986) found perpetrators’ families scored highly dysfunctional on the Family of Origin Scale, with especially high pathology on such things as respect for others, conflict resolution, trust, autonomy, and intimacy.

Langevin’s (1983) findings suggest a willingness of incestuous fathers to exploit others and to violate social norms. The psychopathic deviate (pD) scores on the MMPI were elevated.
However, incestuous fathers do not generally have histories of committing other criminal offenses (Langevin, 1983).

The clinical literature has portrayed incestuous fathers as passive and dependent (Langevin, 1983, yet at the same time, in what at first seems to be a contradiction, they are also frequently described as dominant and tyrannical (Herman, 1981).

Recent studies point to the likely conclusion that some incestuous fathers may have pedophilic preferences, while others may not (Paitch, Langevin, Freeman, Mann, & Handy, 1977). Marshall, Barbaree, and Christopher (1986), administered phallometric testing to 21 incestuous fathers and discovered that the main way in which they were deviant was in their unusually low levels of arousal to adult females. Other than that, they tested much closer in erotic preference to normals than were extrafamilial child molesters. Langevin (1983) found more disgust about sex with adult females among incestuous fathers than among either normals or pedophiles. These conflicts, even in the absence of strong affirmative sexual arousal to children, may be an important part of what leads to sexual interactions with children.

The picture of incestuous families painted by the clinical literature is one of isolation, disorganization, conflict, and antagonism (Browne & Finkelhor, 1991). Olson (1982) found that incestuous families were significantly different in controls on the following dimensions: they were in disarray; there was an unusual degree of parent-child coalition, low empathy, and unresolved conflict. They had a hostile-depressed tone, an incongruent picture of themselves, low efficiency in their negotiations, an inability to accept responsibility, and a tendency to make intrusive remarks and obliterate others’ autonomy. Quinn (1984) found incestuous families to be conflict avoidant, low in community involvement, and also low in adaptability and cohesion. Saunders (1986) noted the same adaptability and cohesion problems and in addition, found
differences on the Family Environment Scale, particularly in terms of signs of social isolation and chaotic structure, which the family tried to control with religiosity and similar external controls.

Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne (1995) conducted a study of ninety-one child sex offenders about the methods they used to target children, the age range of their victims and how they selected children and maintained them as victims. The research revealed that two-thirds of the offenders knew their victims through family or friends or caretaking. The study provided data suggesting that according to the offender’s perceptions, the child who was most vulnerable had family problems, was alone, was non-confident, curious, pretty, “provocatively” dressed, trusting and young or small (Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995).

Other significant findings included that offenders’ most common strategy for recruitment was to offer incentives or to threaten the victim and to give bribes and gifts to the children recruited. In addition, offenders most often used more than one location to abuse children. They would use more than one type of strategy to approach the children or their families. Most often they offered to play games with the children, or teach them a sport, or how to play a musical instrument.

The majority of offenders coerced children by carefully testing the child’s reaction to sex by bringing up sexual matters or having sexual materials around and by subtly increasing sexual touching. This was most often achieved in the offender’s own home where he created a “normalized” sexual setting, including sexually explicit videos and magazines and sexualized talking to seduce children into sexual behavior with them (Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995).

This offender profile background prepares a way of understanding the nature of sexual abuse by clergy in the church. Fortune (1989) argues that because the church is often seen as a
family, incest is indeed an appropriate model for discussing sexual abuse in the church. The
incestuous quality is related to the numinous dimension of the pastoral role. In short, to be in
a representative position means that one’s actions have symbolic import far beyond one’s
personal intentions.

Simon (1987) describes the profile of the typical counselor who becomes sexually
involved with clients as that of a middle-aged, “burned out,” and depressed individual with
marital problems. Butler and Zelen (1977) add feelings of loneliness and vulnerability as major
contributors of exploitation. Omnipotence and grandiosity are important factors noted by
Gorkin (1987). Kottler (1986) notes that narcissism is another common component among
therapists who sexually abuse.

Schoener and Gonsiorek (1988) identify six categories of therapists who sexually
exploit clients. The categorization is based on clinical observations of more than 1,000 cases of
counselor-client sex. The categories are (1) Uninformed and naive: Those who have a genuine
lack of knowledge of standards in counseling and lack an understanding of professional
boundaries. Offenses in this category can be prevented by education. (2) Healthy or mildly
neurotic: Clients who typically exhibit clear awareness of the unethical nature of the conduct
and are remorseful. This category is the most treatable. (3) Severely neurotic: Those who
have longstanding and significant emotional problems, especially depression, feelings of
inadequacy, low self-esteem, and social isolation. These individuals meet their own emotional
needs by counseling. While not impossible, treatment is difficult. (4) Character disorders with
impulse control problems: Many of these counselors are caught because of their many victims
and poor judgment. When severe consequences are pending, they show guilt, remorse,
depression and resemble neurotics. However, they rarely have any true appreciation of the
impact that their behavior has had on others and they tend to deny or minimize the harm they have caused. Because of the repetitive character of their behavior, this group has a poor prognosis for rehabilitation. (5) **Sociopathic or narcissistic character disorders**: This group, though having many of the character disorders of the previous categories, tend to be far more deliberate and cunning in their exploitation of clients. They are typically cool, calculated, and detached and are expert at seducing a wide range of clients and covering their tracks. Because they are utterly self-centered and do not experience guilt over their effect upon others, rehabilitation is not a consideration. (6) **Psychotic or borderline personality disorders**: The common denominator for this group is poor social judgment and impaired reality testing. Rehabilitation is highly unlikely with this group.

Benson (1994) conducted a study to identify through a qualitative research methodology, systemic and situational themes that emerge in the stories of male clergy who engaged in sexual misconduct with adult female counselees. There were three systemic themes that emerged from the study. (1) **Chronic and pervasive lack of emotionally intimate relationships on their personal lives**—subjects were emotionally isolated, lonely, and alone. (2) **Abused, abandoned and exploited**—clergy in the study reported being abused, abandoned and exploited by a parent or parent surrogate. (3) **Grandiose caretaking**—taking care of others was a crucial aspect of their identity and a source of esteem. Situational themes included (1) **poor control of sexual impulse**, (2) **recent significant narcissistic injury**, (3) **Chronic and pervasive feelings of shame**.

From their own perspective, these subjects were “needy” and “vulnerable” when they engaged in sexual behaviors with adult female counselees. They were isolated and alone (Brooks, 1990), they were grieving (Hill, 1992), their self-esteem was fragile (Claman, 1987) and
(Laaser, 1991). They had little pleasure in their life except for the pleasures of sexual gratification. Yet they were successful, capable, talented individuals, in some cases excelling in their area of ministry, the “golden boys” of their religious community, being given tasks for which they were ill prepared and minimally supported (Benson, 1994).

Irons and Laaser (1994) state five generalizations about the background and training of clergymen who were assessed for treatment in their research: (1) They came from family backgrounds characterized by rigidity and dysfunction, with themes of abuse and neglect present. (2) They had little insight into their personal issues in these areas. (3) They had limited training or education in the adverse effects of transference and countertransference in pastoral counseling. (4) They had virtually no training or education in the areas of sexual abuse, domestic violence, addictive disease, or healthy professional boundaries. (5) They had failed to appreciate how their personal history of trauma created wounding that carried over into professional life and contributed to their using power and position for personal gratification.

It is not enough to consider the background and personality profiles of clergy who have committed sexual abuse. Equally important is to measure the impact of the systemic factors within the institution of church that contribute to the nature of sexual abuse. William White (1986) suggests that certain organizations predispose their employees to what he calls “organizational incest”. What precedes the violation of sexual boundaries in his model is a merging process within the institution. The views and values of staff become increasingly homogenous. Dissenters are expelled. As the staff draws yet closer together, they tend to socialize exclusively within the institution, since “no one else understands.” The boundary
between work and social life becomes less and less distinct. Staff think about work constantly. They become their jobs.

At the same time, their jobs leave them emotionally starved. Institutions predisposed to organizational incest place intense stress upon their employees while providing little support. Generally, there are strong “no-talk” rules about sexuality, although many other boundaries have been broken down. The final step for the isolated, depleted, rigidified players in such a system is a sexual violation of institutional boundaries. For example, the CEO sleeps with a department manager. In White’s model, even if professional ethics are not violated, the dual relationship catalytically disrupts the organization by focusing and concentrating simmering feelings of resentment, alienation, and deprivation among other staff. Ultimately, the incestuous institution collapses inward upon itself and implodes (White, 1986).

Religious institutions seem particularly vulnerable to these dynamics. As voluntary organizations competing for shares of a limited market, the existence of churches is always somewhat tenuous. The constant effort to shore up religious identity and faith against persistent erosion takes its toll on employees, lay leaders and lay volunteers. To maintain themselves, religious institutions must offer a broadly diverse menu of services, ranging from worship, education, and counseling to entertainment and social networking. Because they must do so on a limited budget with limited staff, there is a built-in motivation for employees, and for clergy in particular, to exhaust themselves in efforts to be all things to all people. In many congregations, clergy are always on call. They extol the Sabbath, work seven days a week, preach family and put their own family second, offer others serenity and are always in a tizzy (Adler, 1993).
Often in this kind of church working environment, there is no clear line between working and socializing. The same group gathers for both, and conversation inevitably turns to the institution. The more tightly the system contracts upon itself, the more depleted and suffocated participants become and, according to White, the more likely it is that a sexual boundary will be violated (White, 1986).

The various roles that the pastor plays within a local congregation also contributes to the vulnerability for sexual abuse. Formal mental health treatment provides safety for its clients because it takes place at designated, time-limited appointments in a setting free of associations extraneous to therapy, with a professional with whom the client has no other connection. This structure encapsulates and controls the powerful transference feelings therapy evokes: vulnerability, smallness, dependency, and hunger (Adler, 1993).

In the pastoral setting there is a bewildering variety of overlapping or conflicting roles that the clergy person must play. Counselees will worship at services where their counselor is the officiant. They may serve on committees which negotiate with the minister concerning policy or resources, where they may need to disagree with their counselor or veto h/her request. The many varied relations that a minister may have with the counselee makes it very difficult for h/her to conduct psychotherapeutic work.

In addition, many pastors receive insufficient training in identifying transference issues among parishioners that they may counsel. Untrained pastoral counselors may err by personalizing what are actually transference reactions.

Just as clergy’s impact upon congregants is expressed in pastoral transference, the congregants’ impact upon the minister is expressed in pastoral counter-transference. These factors mitigate against the safety of doing deep psychotherapeutic counseling in the pastoral
setting. At the same time, they are also compromising factors that breed the possibilities of clergy sexual abuse (Adler, 1993).

The final piece of examination regarding the nature of clergy sexual abuse is the damage that is done to the congregation. Congregational leaders and members are hurt when clergy misconduct themselves. Adler (1993) states that pastoral sexual impropriety creates cosmic disorder within the life of the congregation. If the minister is exposed as misusing the vast numinous power with which the congregation has invested him, and their dependency upon the clergy person is betrayed, the entire way the congregation has made sense of and practiced its faith has been exploited. The more powerful the pastoral transference, the more desperate the congregation will be to deny, to shift blame, to do anything to protect themselves from the primal terror of abandonment by the powerful figure who was their access to God and Scripture (Adler, 1993).

Nancy Myer Hopkins (1993) adds that there are two factors in the clergy/parishioner dynamic which raises the intensity of the relationship to the point where a betrayal of trust becomes truly devastating. They are the involvement of clergy in major life events of families, and the embodiment of the divine in the person of the clergy.

Adler (1993) concludes that the congregation may receive little help for its shock and emotional stress. Without the help of a neutral resource person, embroiled congregational factions may expend their anger, grief, shame and bitterness less upon the offending pastor than upon one another, or upon the victimized parishioner, causing lasting scars to the community. In such circumstances, it is the incoming minister who will reap the harvest of cynicism and distrust the outgoing minister has sown (Adler, 1993).
SHORT TERM EFFECTS

In cases of clergy sexual misconduct, parishioners are unable to reconcile the good that has been done by the clergy person with the charge of sexual exploitation. They are divided between feelings of affection for the pastor and feelings of disgust and disappointment.

This internal conflict is emotionally paralyzing to a congregation. The charge of clergy sexual abuse creates divisions within the parish. Rosetti (1995) notes that some parishioners who have been personally affected by sexual abuse react strongly; the allegations reopen old wounds. Others receive the allegations with incredulity because the pastor has been a source of blessing.

Lebacqz and Barton (1991) note that individuals who have placed their trust and faith in the fiduciary relationship of parishioner to clergy person experience incalculable damage. According to Fowler (1981), those who are in the earlier stages of faith development have difficulty distinguishing symbols of the divine, such as the priesthood, with the divine itself. On the one hand, they expect the clergy person to be a uniquely holy person while on the other, they struggle with the perception that the clergy person could possibly abuse a child (Rosetti, 1995).

Clergy sexual abuse creates a crisis of faith. Rosetti’s (1995) study suggests that when laity are unaware of any cases of sexual exploitation, their trust and confidence is relatively high (63%-69%). However, when their own pastor has been charged with clergy sexual abuse, trust and confidence drops to 34%, almost in half.

Rosetti (1995) notes that the longer the duration of the abuse, and the more aggression that is used the more traumatic the abuse is likely to be. Browne and Finkelhor’s (1991) studies suggest that abuse by trusted father-figures cause more serious psychic damage in victims than
with other types of perpetrators. Hindman’s (1989) studies underscore that when the disclosure of abuse is made and the victim is not supported but disbelieved, blamed and/or abandoned, that this disclosure disaster further complicates the trauma. When a pastor is charged with sexual abuse, the congregation will respond as a victim.

Rosetti’s (1995) survey notes that in the wake of allegations of sexual exploitation by the pastor, congregations did not believe that the church responded adequately to their needs. Many felt that they were abandoned.

Hopkins (1993) states that there are five main components of a congregational healing process: (1) truth-telling, (2) sharing and validation of feelings, (3) education, (4) spiritual reflection, and (5) answering the question, “What else do you need, in order to be able to heal” (p. 19). Rosetti (1995) states that in many cases in order for congregations to receive information, parishioners are forced to rely on rumors and the secular media. When a clergy person has been charged with sexual misconduct, parishioners want and need to hear information about the event from church officials.

Further, Rosetti (1995) declares that congregations whose pastor has been charged with sexual abuse need strong leadership. The absence of leadership and the rumors of allegations of misconduct create confusion and turmoil. Local parishioners want to know that the steps that are being taken by church officials.

They want to know that the bishop or regional leader is personally in charge. The leaders’ authoritative presence, communicates that he/she is concerned with the parishioners’ pain and wants to help.
Clergy sexual malfeasance creates destructive congregational dynamics that undermine the will of healthy pursuit. Knudsen (1995) states that for some congregations, a pattern of organizational distress and anticlericalism is rooted in a painful, unacknowledged secret of clergy sexual abuse that has been hovering visibly within the congregation. Like radioactive waste, the toxin of the secret infects the organization sapping energy, distorting perceptions, and scrambling normal life processes.

Knudsen (1995) states that in much the same way as families are crippled by the skeletons in the family cupboard, congregations who carry the secret of clergy sexual abuse suffer predictable patterns of organizational distress. He describes a cluster of symptoms, behaviors and attitudes that compromise congregational health.

(1) Distraction and Smoke Screen Patterns - involves persistent confusion about lines of authority and responsibility; a focus on trivial matters that signal avoidance, secret meetings, sabotaging and undermining persons, inadequate system of communication, weak processes of evaluation and feedback, absence of consensus as to priorities regarding mission and pattern of over activity.

(2) Protecting the Secret - includes defensiveness of congregation’s history, reluctance to remember past events, unspoken rules about what shouldn’t be discussed, circulation of inaccurate stories about leader’s departure, a mysterious absence of files, discrediting of people who “left the church”, resistance to reaching out to lapsed membership, and unexplained sudden disappearance of a formerly vital program.

(3) Avenues of Discharge for Rage/Anger - symptoms include persistent scapegoating, blaming, voting with the pocketbook, selection of anger targets,
“stoning the messenger,” congregational depression, demanding dependency, manipulation and power struggles.

(4) Symbolic Expression - may include a sudden obsession with the exterior appearance of the church building, a preoccupation with veiled or overt sexual matters, a symbolic reenactment of sexual misconduct through the selection of future pastors who offend sexually.

(5) Feelings of Violation and Shame - may involve hypervigilance and suspicion, passive behavior, a preoccupation with displaced boundaries, poor self-esteem, isolation, an attempt to find out if visitors are “our kind of people,” preoccupation with matters of doctrinal purity, and lapses into a dynamic of judgmentalism.

Congregations that have experienced sexual misconduct will most often display these problem dynamics with more tenacity and intensity. Even though the patterns may be counterproductive there is an investment in preserving what is familiar.

Hopkins (1993) adds that congregational dynamics common to clergy sexual abuse reflect White’s (1986) description of an incestuous system. She elaborates that such congregations can be viewed as being socially, spiritually and sexually closed.

ELEMENTS OF HEALING

Fortune (1989) contends that the components of congregational healing include truth telling, acknowledging the violation, compassion in protecting the vulnerable, accountability, restitution and vindication. Knudsen (1995) adds to this list that the practice of trauma debriefing, embracing the grief process, the creation of safe space for ventilation of feelings, the states of sexual abuse recovery and the discipline of pastoral theology (especially the
importance of scripture and other faith resources in reflection upon experience). All of these components play a significant role in the healing of congregations.

Congregations that have been supported in facing disclosures of sexual misconduct and have been assisted in administering an intentional healing process become places of joy and health. Healed congregations have healthier relationships with their clergy and church leaders in seeking clarity regarding roles, system of accountability and pastoral practices.
Chapter 3

SEMINAR FINDINGS WITH COMPARISON TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS

The goal of the three workshops was to gather information from the participants regarding the nature and impact of clergy sexual abuse including prioritization of needs for victims, parishes, and offending clergy through the results of a questionnaire. The 290 conference participants identified the following priorities from those individuals who had been directly victimized by clergy sexual abuse: (1) Validation and Support - support and validation for the victim by believing the story of the reported abuse, (2) Prevention - examining precursor patterns of destructive behavior and treating the causes at the source of the problem, (3) Cost of Therapy - addressing the issues of who should fund the cost of therapy for each victim, (4) Full Disclosure - detailing the abuse events to those individuals who were victimized by the act.

This chapter presents an analysis of the results of the questionnaire, the related literature and the implications of the analysis. The questionnaire is found in appendix A.

VICTIM’S NEEDS

1. Validation and Support: Of all the participants, 84% believe that the institutions of religion are responding inappropriately to clergy sexual misconduct. In other words, the participants are stating that victims of clergy sexual abuse are not being supported and their
experience is not being validated. 81% of the respondents believe that the church has covered up clergy sexual abuse. Respondents believe that the church has either denied the reality of clergy sexual abuse and/or have protected clergy perpetrators by refusing to directly confront the issue within the institution.

The concern about protection of clergy perpetrators as an inappropriate response to the problem of abuse is underscored by 70% of the participants who stated that clergy sexual abuse is more common than most people think. Participants believe that validation of the sexual abuse experience through the eyes of the victim is paramount in importance. This belief is supported by 82% of the respondents who stated that it is absolutely essential that church leadership believe the alleged victim. Further support is validated by 72% of the participants who stated that clergy sexual abuse must be publicly disclosed and not veiled in secrecy.

Furthermore, 82% of the respondents believe that the veiled secrecy of clergy sexual abuse is exacerbated by the church’s interest in maintaining the proper image more so than in providing much needed justice. 72% of respondents believe the dynamic of power abuse is related to the church’s attitude toward women, which is believed to be inequitable and unfair.

The literature agrees with the conclusion that was made by respondents in that they believed that clergy sexual abuse is more common than most people think. Earle (1994) cites a study by “Christianity Today” (1989) that 23% of pastors surveyed admitted doing something sexual with someone other than their spouse.

The literature supports the participants response that to validate the experience of sexual abuse and to provide support to the victim is a crucial concern for healing. Hindman (1989) states that severely traumatized sexual abuse victims will often recall the offender’s attention toward the victim’s sexual responsiveness to the abusive act. The horror of
remembering the abuse is fused with the additional trauma of arousal to those horrors. Many victims believe themselves to be culpable and blameworthy because of the arousal factor.

Validation of sexual responsiveness is critical for the victim of clergy sexual abuse to recover. Unlike other kinds of abuse, sexual abuse involves repeating a pattern for the purpose of pleasure, which was once a form of terror (Hindman, 1989). When the sexual response of the victim is validated as a normal biological response to the intrusive act of abuse, it assists the victim to place the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the perpetrator.

There is a certain “terror” factor that figures in clergy sexual abuse. Hindman (1989) writes that those who were involved in ritualistic behaviors in the sexual abuse pattern, seem to experience painful and degrading anticipation about the forthcoming abuse that is terrorizing to the victim. McLaughlin (1994) underscores that to the abused parishioner, the minister is a representative of God. The applied impact is that the abusing minister equals God. She states that the sacred rituals of spiritual worship are contaminated and that validation of the abuse is imperative if the abused parishioner is to ever recover from the arrested spiritual development that has been rendered because of the abuse.

Clergy sexual abuse is often blurred by the numinous dimension (the divine, the holy, the mysterious) that is associated with the pastoral task (Lebacqz & Barton, 1991). Hindman (1989) states that oftentimes the clergy sex offender creates a situation where the victim viewed survivorship as being connected to either pleasing the offender or being closely attached to the offender. Lebacqz & Barton (1991) contend that the minister is in the power position and renders mutual consent to sexual involvement as impossible. Fortune (1989) states that the misuse of power in sexual abuse must be reckoned in order for healing to transpire.
The literature agrees with the response of the participants (81%) that the church has been guilty of denial and granting asylum to offending clergy. The Reverend Canice Connors (1994) verbalized his frustration with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church stating that the denial of responsibility exhibited by the church has created an adversarial relationship to those who have been victimized by clergy sexual abuse that has made it difficult to attain resolution. A. W. Sipe’s research (1995) suggests that 40% to 50% of the priesthood are living double lives of public abstinence and private relationships. Kaiser (1996) points out that religious hierarchies of all faiths across the nation have practiced silencing the problem of clergy sexual abuse by reassigning clerical offenders to new parishes where they were free to continue their abusive practices. Victims were often discredited or sworn to secrecy.

Validation and support of the reality of the abuse event is imperative to the victim for healing. Hindman (1989) agrees with the 82% of the respondents who said that it is absolutely essential that the church believe the alleged victim and support the process of healing. Sexual offenders who generally had physical or personality characteristics that were positive seemed to cause victims to doubt their role as perpetrators because of accolades given to offenders by others.

Certainly, clergy sexual abuse highlights this delimma. Gill (1995) argues that it is the implicit conditioning through the abuse of power that blurs victimization in sexual abuse by clergy. The basic teachings of the church emphasize that innate to the sacred ordination of the pastor is the calling of being God’s representative. Gill (1995) contends that the conditioned belief that ministers--since they are good and holy men--deserve to be shown respectful subservience at all times, contributes to the blurring effect of victimization. Hindman (1989) argues that when the sense of victimization is confused, then the victim is left to take on the
responsibility and guilt for the abuse that the perpetrator refuses to accept. Thus, the absolute need to validate and support the victim’s experience.

Hindman (1989) reports that when secrecy about the abuse is maintained then the damage that is incurred involves making deviancy the foundation of development. When this occurs with children, research shows that victims use the vehicle of sexual abuse to carry them through childhood development. McGlaughlin (1994) supports this research in that her studies argue that unless the trauma is validated and therapeutically addressed, then the victim who is sexually abused by clergy will remain at the developmental level that he or she was in at the time of the abuse.

A.W. Sipe’s (1994) report of the Vatican’s 1993 response that clergy sexual abuse is a western culture phenomena attributable to a sexually stimulated culture, underscores the concern that the church is more concerned to maintain a proper image than providing much needed justice.

Cahill (1994) emphasizes that the denial and defensiveness of the church about allegations of abuse has created a litigious environment and that this attitude of perceived belligerence encourages victims to seek legal proceedings as their next option.

Historically, research shows that the blame for the sexually abusive male pastor has been placed on women (Morey, 1988). Like a rape victim, a woman who becomes sexually involved with her pastor is frequently considered to be the most guilty party—and it is she, not he, who is ultimately put on trial. This concurs with the response of 72% of the participants who believe that the church’s attitude toward women is inequitable and unfair.

2. Prevention: The survey revealed that 94% of the respondents believe that the churches are not doing all they can to prevent power structures that fuel clergy sexual abuse.
Respondents want better training for clergy at the seminary level. The majority of participants (89%) state serious doubts about the adequacy of seminary training in the field of human sexuality, authority and power.

Research underscores the importance of examining the nature of abuse through power structures. Gill (1995) points out that organization is generally established because an exercise of power is needed. The church is an organization capable of conditioning people to respond to its power through the powers of persuasion. Ministers have access to the power vested to them by the church. Gill (1995) insists that training regarding the various forms of power and its potential destructive use is imperative for the seminary candidate. Furthermore, Adler (1993) states that the various roles that clergy play within the local congregation also contribute to the vulnerability for sexual abuse. Adler (1993) notes that many clergy receive insufficient training in identifying transference issues among parishioners that they may counsel. Therefore, untrained pastoral counselors often err by personalizing what are actually transference reactions. White (1986) contends that it is equally important to measure the impact of the systemic factors within the institution of church that contribute to the nature of sexual abuse. Adler (1993) underscores the importance of the seminary trainee understanding the organizational dynamics that lead to sexual abuse.

Lebacqz & Barton (1991) state that the clergy they researched depended upon feeling-oriented intuition to guard them from inappropriate sexual behavior. They adequately point out the danger with relying on this warning system is that something that is wrong can actually feel right. For this reason, it is argued that seminary candidates receive in-depth training for determining boundaries when inappropriate sexual behavior is considered.
Parker (1986) contends that sexual intimacy can be a means of grace, a resource for healing and transformation in life. Lebacqz & Barton (1991) contend that sexuality and spirituality are linked together. Fortune (1989) argues that healthy sexuality requires mutuality and consent and that gaps in the power between pastor and parishioner render consent invalid. Understanding this dynamic requires competent training and education at the candidate level. Sipe (1995) research shows a discrepancy with the traditional presupposition of priestly faithfulness to the vows of celibacy with actual practice among priests. He contends that training and education are needed to address the immature personality structures that characterize candidates in the priesthood.

3. Cost of Therapy: Participants ranked the cost of therapy for victims as the number three priority in the chain of needs. Even though 71% of respondents stated that clergy sexual abuse is different from other abuses, still 60% agreed that complete healing is attainable for those victimized by clergy sexual abuse.

The literature supports the contention that clergy sexual abuse is different from other abuses. Rosetti (1995) suggests that in addition to the need for psychological healing, victims of sexual abuse may have a need for spiritual healing. For those victims for whom religious and spiritual values are important, the damage or loss incurred to their relationships, to their religious ministers, their church and their God, may be of great importance and thus critical to the healing process. Rosetti (1995) states that just as religious organizations are dedicated to the growth of faith and spirituality in their members, they ought to be committed to the healing of damaged faith in the victims of clergy-child sexual abuse.

The preponderance of evidence that the trauma of clergy sexual abuse is seriously debilitating is overwhelming. Rosetti (1995) states that the critical variable affecting the degree
of trauma appears to be the trust the victim had placed in the perpetrator. Hindman (1989) underscores the extreme trauma created by the offender who had extremely positive attributes in the victim’s eyes. McGlaughlin (1994) documents the challenge of religious beliefs, even the question of the existence of God, as a result of clergy sexual abuse. Rosetti’s (1995) study found data to support the hypothesis that abused individuals who had been in therapy expressed less trust in God, church, and priesthood compared to those who had not been in therapy. The effects of abuse are tremendous. Hindman (1989) notes that the victim who is stuck in amnesia and dissociation finds no connection to others, experiences no understanding, and has no peace. The result is lifelong patterns of abusability, depression, suicide and other psychiatric disorders. Cahill (1994) insists that the church take responsibility as an institution for clergy sexual abuse. She further intimates that much of the legal proceedings that have been taken against the church might be avoided if the church would take responsibility. The literature is divided and unclear in terms of the actual dollar amounts that should be limited to church responsibility. However, Willerscheidt (1995) contends that most victims should be compensated by the Church for their therapy costs and their suffering. But, she adds that most are not as interested in getting money as they are in getting well. It is only when the Church does not respond to them in a fair and equitable way do they resort to hiring attorneys.

4. Full Disclosure: The fourth priority in the chain of needs is full disclosure. Inasmuch that 84% of respondents believe that institutions of religion are responding inappropriately to clergy sexual misconduct, there is an obvious concern about full disclosure regarding the sexual abuse by clergy. 81% of participants believe that the church has covered up abuse situations. 87% of the total number of respondents believe that clergy sexual misconduct is even more common than most people think.
Even though 72% of the respondents believe that clergy sexual abuse requires public disclosure, the respondents are divided as to whether or not full disclosure should be made publicly. The totals tabulated show 35% say yes, 42% say no. What is agreed is that 59% of participants believe the identity of the victim should not be disclosed.

Literature supports the 84% of the respondents who state that the church is inappropriate in their response. Abel (1994) laments that the Catholic Church must see the issue to be more than a violation of the celibate commitment. Burkett and Bruni (1993) chronicle numerous examples that detail the shrouding of clergy sexual abuse in denial. Hopkins (1993) agrees with the 72% of respondents who argue for full public disclosure, saying that truth-telling levels the playing field. Hindman (1989) warns of the danger of disclosure disaster when disclosure seems to add trauma rather than assist in the healing process. This warning is in no way meant to discourage disclosure but to prepare those responsible for disclosure to protect against more abuse, institutionalization, and abandonment for the victim. Furthermore, Hindman (1989) insists that full disclosure provides the best opportunity for the victim to confront the trauma and to avoid contaminating their personal foundation for development with the perception of secret abuse. Hopkins and Maris (1993) argues that truth-telling is important because it gives voice to the reality of the abuse.

The divided response to the issue of public full disclosure may be accounted for by the fact that there is much confusion between the rights of privacy, the constraints of the confessional and the need for confidentiality (Hopkins, 1993).
The issue of clergy sexual abuse is more common than most people think. The priority issue that confronts the church is to validate the abuse experience and to offer support to the abused victim. Conference participants (84%) and the review of the literature clearly state that validation and support is the church’s most important priority. To be heard, to be believed, to know that the perpetrator won’t hurt others, to be accepted and to receive justice are priority needs of those victimized by clergy sexual abuse (Hopkins and Maris, 1993). It is implied that in order for these needs to be met, validation of the abuse and support to the victim must be accomplished.

The stories of denial, cover up and protection by church leaders have cost the church millions of dollars (Burkett and Bruni, 1993). Resistance to openness and communication about the abuse event is detrimental to the primary victim and to the church as well. Confusion about privacy rights, the constraints of the confessional and the need for confidentiality must be clarified (Hopkins, 1993).

Judicatory officials who mistakenly think that they can protect the congregation and the rest of the church from further damage by keeping things quiet, only add fuel to an out of control fire (Hopkins, 1993).

The need for full disclosure is often thwarted because religious leaders frequently fear that any compassion or empathy shown to the survivor will be mistaken as an admission of culpability and legal liability. Therefore, they exacerbate an already volatile situation by denying or minimizing the reported abuse.

An environment that sponsors half-hearted disclosure is one that is vulnerable to disclosure disaster (Hindman, 1989). The response to full disclosure that adds trauma for the victim of clergy sexual abuse is one that places sole or partial blame upon the victim as a co-
conspirator in the abuse event. This blame further intensifies the abuse and the abandonment that the victim experienced during the initial transgression.

The implication of clergy sexual abuse is that whenever the identity of the perpetrator is blurred because of the numinous dimension of the office or for any other reason, then the traumatized victim is left feeling unworthy, guilt-ridden and responsible (Hindman, 1989).

The difference with clergy sexual abuse from other forms of abuse is that it is inflicted by a representative of God. The issue of trust in God is contaminated. The spiritual impact on victims of clergy sexual abuse is dramatically increased (McLaughlin, 1994).

The current situation in many religious systems and organizations gives cause for alarm because many of the ingredients that would help prevent instances of power abuse and sexual exploitation are missing. Untrained pastoral counselors do not comprehend the dynamics of transference and countertransference (Adler, 1993). Awareness about the use and misuse of power vested to the role of the clergyperson is much needed but often missing (Gill, 1995). Educational information must be taught about the impact of systemic factors within the institution of the church that contribute to the nature of sexual abuse (White, 1996).

Personal boundaries must be addressed in the formation stages of the clergyperson (Lebqacqy & Barton, 1991). Serious concern is shared by both participants and the literature regarding the adequacy of sexuality education at the seminary level. Lebacqy & Barton, (1991) contend that sexuality and spirituality are linked together. Yet there has not been written a theology of sexuality in the history of the Church (Sipe, 1994). Clearly, an integration of healthy sexuality and healthy spirituality is much needed.

In summary, clergy sexual abuse is a trauma that denudes the soul of the basic sense of trust that is so needed in the quest for spirituality. Contamination of the sacred rituals is the
result of the one who pledges his faith to God, only to be betrayed by his representative through sexual abuse. Hindman’s (1989) footprints of amnesia and dissociation lead the victim parishioner into experiences of no understanding, no connection and no peace. Oftentimes, the victim is rendered stuck in the stage of spiritual development that h/she was abused. The church should compensate all therapeutic costs incurred by the victim of clergy sexual abuse. It is only when the church does not respond to victims in a fair and equitable way do they resort to hiring attorneys (Willerscheidt, 1995).

Clarification and educational instructions are much needed at the local and judicatory levels of the church about appropriate full disclosure. Confusion exists regarding the communication of appropriate information when there is clergy sexual abuse. The failure to demonstrate a pastoral response may severely undermine the survivors expectations of the religious institution. The survivor often feels betrayed. Only when the church fails to validate and support the experience of the victim whose need is to be believed, heard and accepted, does litigation become a priority. The literature review and the survey respondents were quite clear on this point. Survivors who file lawsuits usually do so because they feel they have no adequate recourse within the religious institutional system (Hopkins and Maris, 1993).

OFFENDER CONSIDERATIONS: RESPONDENTS’ VIEWS, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND IMPLICATIONS

Respondents to the questionnaire stated six important priorities for the church in regard to the offenders. In order of priority, they are: (1) Full accountability including legal sanctions, (2) Vocational rehabilitation to insure no further opportunity to victimize, (3) Training programs, information and seminary curriculum, (4) Opportunity to make personal
restitution, (5) The examination in depth of all organizational factors that lead to the abuse, and
(6) The cost of therapy.

1. Full Accountability Including Legal Sanctions: An overwhelming number of
respondents (84%) believe that the church’s response to clergy sexual abuse is inappropriate.
Likewise, an even larger percent (87%) of the respondents believe that clergy sexual abuse is
more common than most people think. Most respondents believe that the church’s
inappropriate response involves deceit and cover-up (81%). It stands to reason that most
respondents (82%) think that the church should believe the alleged victim and that full
accountability of the offender would involve public disclosure (72%) even if it needs to include
legal sanctions.

The respondents were unclear (35% yes - 42% no) with regard to how much
information should be made public. However, they were clear (59%) that the identity of the
adult victim should not be disclosed.

The literature review is clear about the damage done when clergy sexual abuse happens
and the church denies, minimizes and protects the clergy perpetrator. Sipe (1994) states that
historically, the church has failed to recognize the problem of clergy sexual abuse, concluding
that clergy sexual abuse is more common than most people think. Earle (1994) cites that the
results of a 1991 Fuller Institute of Church Growth Study of clergy that indicate 37% confess
having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone they work with. Fortune
(1989) states that clergy sexual abuse undercuts and violates the trust necessary in pastoral
relationship with parishioners. Hindman (1989) argues for full public disclosure, stating that
her studies show that sex offenders who were highly respected in the community seemed to
have their identity as perpetrator blurred to the victim. Public disclosure clarifies confusion
that is important for healing. Hindman (1989) further notes that failing to make the offense public through full disclosure adds to the secrecy of the act and further victimizes the offended, who suffer silently allowing sexually abusive perceptions to warp their foundation of development.

Jorgenson (1995) defines the fiduciary responsibility of the church to the victim. Clark (1993) underscores the importance of full disclosure by declaring that if the church knows about the abuse and does nothing about it, then it is considered legally as a complicit conspirator. The attempts of the church to minimize and keep secret clergy sexual abuse have now been declared illegal by the law.

Furthermore, offender treatment benefits from public disclosure. Levine, Risen and Althof (1994) notes that sex offenders will characteristically confess to the minimum amount that he perceives is known to the authorities. Jenkins-Hale (1994), Loftus & Camargo (1993) notes that clergy are often bright, articulate and verbal. These men are particularly adept to utilizing manipulation and deceit. Fortune (1989) declares that full public disclosure melts denial and provides a necessary bridge to effective treatment. O'Donahue and Letourneau (1993) note that most treatment programs require an admission of sex offense before they are admitted to the program. Full public disclosure paves the way for treatment to begin for the offending clergy.

Hopkins (1993) notes that much of the unclarity shared by the respondents could be a result of the vagueness and confusion that exists between the rights of privacy, the constraints of the confessional, and the need for confidentiality.

2. Vocational Rehabilitation To Insure No Further Opportunity To Victimize:
Respondents were unclear (36% yes, 44% no) about offending clergy returning to active
pastoral ministry. However, they were quite certain (74%) that offending clergy should be
allowed to work again in ministry when there was no access to victims.

The literature review reflects the uncertainty of the respondents about professional
rehabilitation. Brubaker (1993) states that because of the violation of trust which has occurred,
it is unlikely that clergy offenders could ever be reinstated to his previous parish or position.
Adler (1993) states that the offending clergy person should not be reinstated when the
prognosis for rehabilitation is poor. Irons and Laaser (1994) in their archetypal categorization
of offenders conclude that the possibility for reinstatement of clergy offenders is greater for the
categories Naive Prince, Wounded Warrior, Self-Serving Martyr and the False Lover than it is
for the Dark King and the Wild Card. In announcing the Chicago Archdiocesan policy about
clergy sexual abuse, the late Cardinal Bernardin stated that clergy sex offenders should never
return to the ministry (When the Unspeakable Must be Spoken, 1992).

3. Training Programs, Information and Seminary Curriculum: The conference
respondents stated that the third issue of priority to address with offenders is the concern
about prevention. The literature review supports prioritizing the issue of prevention of sexual
abuse in the church. Denominational bodies need increasingly comprehensive measures to
eradicate sexual abuse and to guarantee that the church will be a safe place.

Hopkins (1993) states that a major educational task is to explain the issues of power
abuse to both a naive clergy and an unsuspecting congregation. Adler (1993) believes that
some personal therapy should be required for all clergy. She contends that those who do not
understand themselves sufficiently are dangerous guides for others.

Richards (1996) suggests that a thorough education of human sexuality be required in
seminary training similar to medical school. He further advises the need for the development
of a comprehensive screening protocol that would screen candidates for admission to the ordained ministry. Lundin (1993) argues that it is essential to encourage people to deal with a male empowered patriarchal system.

IMPLICATIONS

The frozen denial of clergy sexual abuse by the church must thaw. Public full disclosure confronts denial through exposing the reality of the truth. The luxury of secrecy and the protection that comes from denial has now been legally void (Clark, 1993). The Church must now become proactive to expose the dark deeds of sexual abuse by clergy to the light of public exposure or face legal liability.

The devastation of sexual abuse by clergy has created a muddied future about the prospects of rehabilitation and reentry. Certainly, clearer standards around reassignment or dismissal must emerge.

Prevention must be prioritized within the local parish and the clergy profession. A comprehensive screening protocol in the selection process of ministerial candidates is a project that will test the ecumenical will of the church, nationwide (Richards, 1996).

The Judeo-Christian concerns for justice, compassion, healing, the integrity of leadership, and the possibility of conversion make unacceptable the more simplistic and obvious approaches to offenders, either across-the-board permanent dismissal or a “cheap grace” forgiveness approach. They demand that we continue tracking the careers of ostensibly rehabilitated offenders and work at the same time to broaden the community’s understanding.

PARISH NEEDS
Respondents prioritized six categories of concern in response to the needs of the parish. They are in order: (1) Full disclosure of the violation, (2) Parish process to discuss nature of abuse and reactions, (3) Parish education programs to prevent future abuse in general, (4) Examination in depth of parish issues that contribute to abuse, (5) Organization-wide examination of attitudes toward abuse of women, (6) Sex education which underlines issues of power and vulnerability.

1. Full Disclosure: The message that is loud and clear from the respondents is that the church is inappropriately responding to clergy sexual abuse (84%) and that not enough attention is being given to the faith community after abuse disclosure (88%). Respondents believe that addressing the belief that the church is covering up abuse (81%) requires public disclosure (72%). Public disclosure opens the door to the process and discussion of the nature of abuse and reactions. Respondents believed programs designed to prevent future abuse help to defuse the spread of abuse throughout the faith community.

The literature review is in agreement with the need for public disclosure. Hopkins (1993) states that when we dispel the secret, we level the playing field for all, especially for the parish. McDonough (1995) states that full public disclosure creates concrete accountability and overcomes deceit with common sense truth. Disclosure enables congregations to rise to the challenge and learn to address issues of sexual health and recovery in a much more sophisticated and helpful manner.

2. Parish Process to Discuss Nature of Abuse and Reactions: McDonough (1995) further states that putting in place an available set of policies and procedures that can be presented to the leadership of the church prior to the crisis is of critical importance. The objective is to structure a path in the parish process to discuss the nature of abuse and
reactions. When pre-education has been done so that the congregation is told of the denominational process of hearing and investigating allegations, more trust is built for the action the denomination takes.

3. Parish Education Programs: Hopkins (1993) notes that broad educational efforts are required for the prevention of clergy sexual abuse. According to Hopkins, there is evidence that a systemic approach to clergy misconduct aids in incident prevention and the maintenance of a climate of “health and wellness” among clergy.

Adler (1993) argues that clergy and congregations should be educated to understand that supervision and consultation on a regular basis are non-negotiable prerequisites to safe and responsible counseling. She further contends for a congregant bill of rights, which would make clergy/congregant relations safer by articulating standards, rules, appropriate expectations, and a compliant process.

IMPLICATIONS

The literature review underscores the emphasis of 73% of the respondents who stated that public disclosure is a necessity. Parishes and judicatory officials would be wise to have sufficient understanding about what constitutes appropriate disclosure. Judicatory officials are often pressured by offenders to keep things quiet. Hopkins (1993) notes that if they do not fully understand the damage this does to congregations, they may think that going public is not all that important and will acquiesce to a request for silence.

Clergy need to expect that a consequence of acting out will be that their behavior will be made public, and that there may be press releases. In the long run, guilty clergy who
experience such consequences will move more quickly out of denial and begin their own healing.

According to Earle (1994), 37% of clergy questioned in a study conducted by the Fuller Institute Growth group admitted to inappropriate sexual contact with someone other than their spouse. This high percentage suggests that judicatories in local parishes must be prepared in paving the way to address this tragedy in a proactive manner.

Judicatories must develop policies and procedures that communicate concrete accountability for offending clergy (McDonough, 1995). It is imperative that the local and hierarchical levels of parish leadership work in tandem to create an environment and a sense of clear direction that addresses the issues of sexual health and recovery in a much more sophisticated and helpful manner.

Efforts to prevent clergy sexual abuse will fall short without a multifaceted approach that includes parish education. Hopkins (1993) notes that a major educational task is absolutely critical so that people will not blame the victim and so that congregations will learn to avoid the destructive behavior of scapegoating the pastors who follow.
Chapter 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clergy sexual misconduct is a tragic crisis in the Church. There are some who think that the phenomena of sexual abuse in the Church is not as great because there is less media coverage of cases involving the ministry and sexual abuse. While it is true that the conscious of America may become jaded because of the frequency of incidents clergy sexual abuse reported, it would be a mistake to assume that occurrences are less often. The impact of clergy sexual abuse does not disappear merely by the passing of time. As this paper has attempted to document, the implications of sexual abuse in the Church have wide ramifications and seriously damages the safety of the Church for parishioners.

It is this researcher’s intent to share reflections and recommendations to address the challenge of clergy sexual misconduct in the local parish.

THE VICTIM

The day and time of silencing the victim of sexual misconduct and secretly transferring the offending pastor to another parish must be over. Criminal charges, civil suits and litigious proceedings have forced the Church to rethink their approach to coping with this crisis. Courts have awarded judgements that in some cases have bankrupted the institution. It has not been the brokenness of victims but rather the monetary depletion of resources due to litigation that has gotten the attention of the Church hierarchy. The frequent failure to
demonstrate a pastoral response severely undermines the survivor’s expectations of the
religious institution, and, thus, compounds his or her mental, spiritual and emotional injuries.
The survivor often feels betrayed.

Unresolved conflict can act like a snowball rolling downhill. As it continues, its size
and intensity increase. Three steps are usually involved in achieving a satisfactory and
satisfying, resolution of any conflict for all concerned. First, the conflict issue and the parties’
collateral interests must be identified. Active listening should be prioritized because as
opposed to minimization or denial by words or gestures, active listening can encourage the
survivor to go beyond recounting the details of abuse to relating collateral interests that need
addressing as well. Collateral interests include needs such as reconciliation with the institution,
provisions for therapy and the like. Second, once identified, acceptance of the conflict issue
and the parties’ collateral interests is imperative. This acceptance should not be viewed as an
admission of guilt, but, rather, as a recognition of the survivor’s perceived injury and its
repercussions in his or her personal relations. Finally, the parties must engage in a collaborative
effort to formulate an agreement that appropriately responds to the conflict issue and their
collateral interests. When religious leaders and survivors engage in collaborative efforts to
formulate an appropriate response to both the abuse issue and any collateral interests, mutual
goals can be recognized.

The process of healing is a slow and painful journey known only to a few. The Church
can assist the healing process by being sensitive to the needs of its survivors: It is this
researcher’s conviction that the following needs must be addressed by a compassionate
Church:

(1) The survivor needs to be believed by the Church.
(2) To hear that it is not the victim’s fault. For officials to believe that it is the behavior of the perpetrator that is wrong, not the fact that the victim reported the behavior.

(3) To hear that others won’t be hurt by the perpetrator and that other victims will get help.

(4) To hear an apology. Most victims will accept it whenever it comes.

(5) To be advised that they should not go to congregational meetings in which the exploitation will be disclosed.

(6) To have justice for themselves, to know that what happened was wrong.

(7) To be considered courageous, not troublemakers.

(8) To be supported in the healing journey by the Church.

(9) To be accepted within the community and know they are loved by God.

It is this researcher’s belief that most victims should be compensated by the Church. Only when the Church does not respond to them in a fair and equitable way do they resort to hiring attorneys.

The process of helping a victim come forward will be greatly expedited if a denomination has available trained victim’s advocates. The role of the advocate is to be there for the victim, to assist each person to prepare their case, and bring it forward. By being also familiar with the local judicatory officials and church polity, the advocate can act as a liaison. Well chosen advocates will have credibility in the system, but it will be clear to everyone that the advocate is working primarily for the victim. A good advocacy program can, in many cases, avoid the involvement of lawyers, although a victim must feel free to consult with a lawyer at any time.
Truth telling levels the playing field so that victims can find justice. Judicatories and local parishes must be well schooled in what is appropriate legal disclosure. Offending clergy must know that they will be held accountable for their offending action and that they will face the consequence of public disclosure.

Reconciliation and forgiveness only happens at the end of a long and painful process for all involved. It is sometimes tempting for people to try to get closure before it is appropriate, especially if, as church people, they feel compelled to forgive or seek forgiveness before everyone is truly ready.

If a survivor chooses to have a meeting for reconciliation, that person will have been in therapy for a long enough period to be strong, and no longer giving over any of their power to the offender. It is only through this process of empowerment that reconciliation becomes a possibility.

The offender will have been in many years of therapy after admitting his actions were clearly wrong. He will be able to understand the shattering effect of his abusive behavior on the victim, and to take full responsibility for his actions.

Even though a survivor’s continued recovery must not depend on getting an apology from the offender, a genuine reconciliation can be tremendously helpful for the ongoing healing of both survivor and offender.

Adler (1993) advocates for a Congregant Bill of Rights. In the opinion of this researcher, this can be a very helpful preventative tool in avoiding clergy sexual misconduct. When consumers must make themselves vulnerable in order to receive a service, they need to be able to trust the service provider not to take advantage of them. They need to know what the professional standards are for appropriate treatment. Many service providers offer this
information in the form of a bill of rights which is distributed to clients or consumers when
they first contract for service. A copy of this bill of rights may be framed and posted on the
wall of the lobby or waiting room. The bill of rights educates consumers about professional
boundaries and limits, teaches them appropriate expectations for service, and informs them
how to obtain redress if these standards are not met. The congregant bill of rights would make
pastor-congregant relations safer by clearly articulating standards, rules, appropriate
expectations, and a complaint process. Through their national organizations, congregants and
ministers could draft the document cooperatively. Parishioners could receive a copy when they
make their counseling appointment. By discussing the bill of rights as preliminary to
counseling, ministers and the client can make an explicit contract in place of the implicit
contract so common in pastoral counseling. Healthy and effective relations between pastors
and parishioners can best be ensured when boundaries and goals are clearly defined.

Religious organizations would do well to note the religious and spiritual damage to
victims caused by sexual abuse, especially when the perpetrator is one of their own church
leaders. Just as religious organizations are dedicated to the growth of faith and spirituality in
their members, they ought to be committed to the healing of damaged faith in the victims of
clergy sexual abuse.

THE OFFENDER

Recommendation for prevention of sexual misconduct. This researcher would like to
make the following suggestions.

(1) Education and training: Pastors need to learn sufficient assessment skills to
evaluate the general nature and magnitude of a client’s problem or disorder and in order to
determine whether it can appropriately be addressed in the pastoral setting or referred for professional therapy. Pastors should be educated to observe the boundaries and ethical standards expected of other counseling professionals, such as preservation of client confidentiality and avoidance of all sexual contact with clients.

(2) Personal therapy: Given the historical baggage that contributes to issues of counter-transference in the counseling context, it should be a requirement for ministers to experience their own personal therapy. A large percentage of sexually exploitive professionals experienced psychological wounding and often physical, emotional or sexual abuse in their formational environments. The theological tasks for exploitive religious professionals are to accept the forgiveness of God and others and to re-establish a relational quality of life that reflects a personal relationship with God that influences and frames their interpersonal lives. The movement is marked as a passage from self-doubt, fear, denial and anger to a humble perception of oneself as acceptable and worthy to be a beloved child of God. It is this researcher’s belief that only through offering forgiveness and reconciliation to all, including those servants of our churches who have fallen, can we represent God’s love on earth.

In addition, professional psychological testing should be administered to detect personality traits and character disorders that could be destructive in the pastoral setting. A screening procedure should be administered at the seminary level of training. If a ministerial candidate signals character properties that would suggest destructive tendencies in a pastoral environment that could not be likely remedied in therapeutic process, then that candidate should be expelled from pastoral consideration.

(3) Supervision of Practice: The more isolated a practitioner is, the more vulnerable s/he is to error. All pastors who counsel should be required to obtain supervision from a
qualified mental health professional or review their cases with a peer consultation group. Groups might be led by a qualified professional, until they have stabilized and their members have attained sufficient skill to proceed without a leader. Pastors and congregations should be educated to understand that supervision and consultation on a regular basis are not optional or time-wasting, but non-negotiable prerequisites to safe and responsible counseling.

When a fair and thorough process results in a finding that an infraction has been committed, the offender should be evaluated by an independent, multidisciplinary team. The denial, delusions, and verbal skills of these men too easily fool single investigators. The sooner that this takes place after an accusation has been made, the better for all concerned parties. Rehabilitation and restoration are more likely when assessment and treatment takes place early in the exploitation cycle. Each case present unique patterns. Treatment must be tailored to the individual’s eccentricities rather than generically offered. The process of rehabilitation and restoration is ongoing. It takes place over a lifetime. Rarely can a minister leave primary treatment and immediately return to work. Sexually exploitive clergy may be as addicted to their power and their role as they are to sex (or to anything else). Abstaining from the role may be as important as abstaining from other addictive behaviors or substances.

It is this researcher’s sincere belief that the prevention of clergy sexual abuse is a matter of preserving ministerial boundaries and promoting individual health, both personal and professional. The fundamental assumption is that ministers who actively maintain their own physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological health are less likely to violate boundaries through sexual misbehavior.

One important key to healing clergy sexual abuse is intervention. The tragedy of some forms of intervention in this matter has involved disastrous disclosure whereby the victim was
re-victimized because important church believers refused to believe and/or minimized the survivor’s story

Intervention is the first action step in resolving allegations of clergy sexual impropriety or misconduct. A successful intervention requires complete honesty and compassion on the part of those who are confronting the potentially impaired religious professional. A straightforward presentation of the allegation is almost always the best approach. Expression of concern on the part of church authorities and others present can help the accused form slipping into morbid despair and possible suicidal ideation or action while making it readily apparent that sexual harassment, abuse and offense are intolerable and unacceptable. A good intervention reflects social justice by making the perpetrator of sexual exploitation accountable for the behavior and assuring the victim(s) that there will be no further misconduct.

This researcher believes that clergy should not be returned to congregational ministry when it is clear that they have recently engaged in sexual misconduct with minors. Clergy who are known to have repeatedly exploited congregants or harassed coworkers generally should not be returned to parochial ministry. This researcher believes that full public disclosure relieves concern about the fear that long-distance monitoring can never be entirely trustworthy or successful. It also creates a bond of trust between the Judicatory leadership and the local congregational leadership.

THE CONGREGATION

Recommendations for Treatment: When sexual misconduct occurs, there are many more people who will begin to feel the victimization of the betrayal by the religious leader. The largest number will be in the congregation the leader served or in the organization he or
she served. So it is critical to approach the congregation in the same way that we approach a person who is about to receive the news of the death of a loved one.

It is critical, just as with the original victim, that the denomination have available a set of policies and procedures that can be presented to the leadership and the congregation before a crisis occurs. The congregation can be made to feel safe at a time it is receiving news of any kind of betrayal, and the advocate’s role will be to restore order in the chaos this kind of event will cause.

Truth-telling is absolutely essential for effective congregational healing. One of the primary needs of a local congregation whenever there is clergy sexual misconduct is information. It is imperative that local congregations become well-versed in the rights of privacy, the constraints of the confessional and the need for confidentiality.

To assist this process, this researcher recommends the concept of a parish assistance team. A small team of professionals at the regional level should be trained and be “on call.” This team might include a public relations person, a mental health professional, a civil lawyer, and a pastoral person. Whenever a situation arises, chancery officials would contact the parish and ask the leadership if they would like the assistance of this team.

The public relations person would help the parish leadership deal with the media who deluge the parish with requests for statements and interviews. S/he might assist the parish leadership in drafting a statement to present to the media and in identifying one member of the parish leadership to interact with the media.

The mental health professional and pastoral person might hold listening sessions or parish meetings. They will want to schedule educational programs to provide information on
child sexual abuse. They can process the hurt, anger, and disappointment of the parishioners.

They can also make referrals to psychotherapists and pastoral counselors where indicated.

The civil lawyer will be a key person if the accused pastor is brought up on civil or criminal charges. The lawyer can provide general information to the parishioners on the legal process and any information related to this particular case that is able to be released.

The elements of healing in a congregation must include the practice of trauma debriefing, the grief process, and the creation of safe space for the ventilation of feelings.

Disclosures of sexual misconduct are experiences of loss. People need to know that they do not have to “give up” their good experiences with the pastor or church leader. Grieving a lost relationship involves grieving what was good in that relationship as well as what was painful or problematic for others or for oneself.

The congregation must wrestle with the unique role of the pastor, the imbalance of power that can result when vulnerable people place their trust in designated care-givers, and the special obligations that come with ordination.

It is this researcher’s deepest belief that healed congregations have healthier relationship with their clergy and church leaders in seeking clarity regarding roles, systems of accountability, and pastoral practices. They understand and embrace shared responsibility for their community life. They will often report that the disclosure and healing they initially feared and resisted has brought renewal and strength.


When the unspeakable must be spoken. (1992). Editorial. *America*, October


APPENDIX A

ISTI 1995 DISCOVERY CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM
ISTI 1995 Discovery Conference Participant Information Form (2 sides)

(= 2.24 Los Angeles) (= 3.10 Philadelphia) (= 3.31 St Louis)

(1) Age: __________ (2) Gender: (a) Female (b) Male (3) State of current residence: __________

(4) I am: (a) Heterosexual (b) Homosexual (c) Bisexual (5) Race: __________

(6) Religious Background:
   (a) Baptist (b) Episcopal (c) Evangelical (d) Fundamentalist
   (e) Lutheran (f) Methodist (g) Mormon (h) Presbyterian
   (i) Roman Catholic (j) UCC (k) Other Christian: __________
   (n) Jewish (o) Other Non-Christian: __________

(7) Current Religious Practice: __________

(8) Are you presently a member of a faith community in which clergy sexual abuse has occurred? (a) Yes (b) No

(9) Your current profession:
   (a) Parent (b) Student (c) Clergy/Religious (d) Medical Doctor
   (e) Therapist/Counselor (f) Educator (g) Attorney (h) Insurance Agent
   (i) Church Administrator (j) Advocate (k) Other: __________
   (l) Neighbor: __________

VICTIM: (10) Are you a victim of sexual abuse? (a) No (b) Yes (11) At what age span? Age: ___ to ___

(12) How many different people abused you? _______ (Number) (13) Total number of times abused: _______

(14) Who abused you (check as many as are appropriate)?
   (a) Father (b) Mother (c) Relative (d) Male Clergy/Religious
   (e) Female Clergy/Religious (f) Medical Doctor (g) Attorney (h) Educator
   (i) Therapist/Counselor (j) Neighbor (k) Other: __________

(15) I am (have) receiving professional help and support (a) Yes (b) No: Explain __________

OFFENDER: (16) Are you a perpetrator of sexual abuse? (a) No (b) Yes (17) At what age span? Age ___ to ___

(18) How many different people have you abused? _______ (Number) (19) I continue to abuse (a) Yes (b) No

(20) Whom have you abused (check as many as appropriate)?
   (a) Males (b) Females (c) Children (d) Adults
   (e) Parishioners (f) Patients/ Clients (g) Neighbor (h) Friend
   (i) My Children (k) My Students (m) Other: __________

(21) I am (have) receiving professional help and support (a) Yes (b) No: Explain __________

(22) Other information you feel is important for ISTI to know about your history: __________

(Please answer questions also on other side)
ISTI Discovery Conference Participant Questionnaire

Please circle Y (Yes) or N (No) in response to each of the following questions:

Y N 01. Are institutions of religion responding appropriately to clergy sexual misconduct?
Y N 02. Do you believe your church has covered up abuse situations?
Y N 03. Is complete healing of the victim an attainable goal?
Y N 04. Are offenders attracted to positions of church leadership?
Y N 05. Is clergy sexual misconduct even more common than most people think?
Y N 06. Are victims of clergy sexual misconduct different from other abuse survivors?
Y N 07. Does the resolution of clergy sexual abuse require public disclosure?
Y N 08. Can offenders ever work again in the active pastoral ministry?
Y N 09. Can offenders ever work again in ministry in which there is no access to victims?
Y N 10. Is it essential for church leadership to believe the alleged victim?
Y N 11. Does resolution require the victims to confront their offenders?
Y N 12. Should all information be disclosed?
Y N 13. Should the identity of the adult victim be disclosed?
Y N 14. Can there be a just alternative to litigation?
Y N 15. Should all allegations of abuse be believed?
Y N 16. Generally, is seminary training adequate about human sexuality, authority, and power?
Y N 17. Are clergy especially vulnerable to the misuse of power?
Y N 18. Do you believe that churches are doing all they can to prevent future abuse?
Y N 19. Do you think churches are more interested in their image than in justice?
Y N 20. Do you feel your church’s attitude toward women is equitable or fair?
Y N 21. Is too much expected of clergy in ministry?
Y N 22. Is celibacy a factor in sexual abuse in the Catholic Church?
Y N 23. Is enough attention given to the faith community (parish) after abuse disclosure?
Y N 24. 

What do you think the priorities of churches should be? (Please rank order by placing a “1” in front of your #1 priority, a “2” for your #2 priority, etc. Put a “0” in front of any item you do not consider a priority.

For Victims:

___ restitution
___ costs of therapy
___ opportunity to confront offender
___ validation and support

For Offenders:

___ full disclosure
___ apology for any lack of action
___ best effort for preventing sexual abuse from occurring again

____ full accountability including legal sanctions
___ examination in depth of all organizational factors that led to abuse
___ training programs, information and seminary curriculum
___ examination in depth of parish issues that contribute to abuse
___ organization-wide examination of attitudes toward abuse of women
___ sex education which underlines issues of power and vulnerability
___ parish process to discuss nature of abuse and reactions
___ parish education programs to prevent future abuse in general