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Charity and abuse: fundraising and symbolic power in the case of Jimmy Savile

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Citation:

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Charity and Abuse: Fundraising and Symbolic Power in the Case of Jimmy Savile

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Abstract

In life, Jimmy Savile was revered as Britain's greatest charity fundraiser. In death, he is remembered as Britain's most notorious pedophile. Raising over £40 million for good causes throughout his media career, a year after his death several investigations revealed a history of abuse of hundreds of children, mostly young girls, across the institutions he worked or volunteered at. Using the framework of the symbolic power of charity, this article documents how these crimes were either missed or covered up. Savile used his fundraising prowess and the "good glow" of his reputation to enable his abuse and shield him from discovery. Institutions prioritized their reputation or fundraising income over bad publicity and proper safeguarding. Drawing on a growing critical literature, this is the first article to explore the role of Savile's charity in his crimes and highlights the increased concern over charity's role as a tool of reputation laundering for elites.

Introduction

In 2011, Britain's most celebrated fundraiser, Sir Jimmy Savile, died. Savile was a radio DJ, television presenter, and all-round media personality, who had been at the forefront of British public life for over 50 years. During that time, he was knighted, both by the British government and the Pope, for his huge contributions to charitable

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causes, including fundraising for the rebuilding of the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, which included running dozens of marathons and many long-distance walks. Friends with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Prince Charles, Savile was at the center of the British establishment, seen as someone who understood young people, and was used by the British elite to help connect them to working-class life. On his death, he was lauded as Britain's most successful individual fundraiser, raising over £40 million for good causes in his lifetime (around £130 million in today's money). At his funeral, he was praised for his "colourful and charitable life," a life which was "an epic of giving" for which he would receive "the ultimate reward—a place in Heaven" (Davies, 2014, p. 6).

A year later, however, Jimmy Savile's reputation was rightly destroyed. A mountain of evidence came to light from various media and police investigations which demonstrated that Savile was, in reality, a highly predatory pedophile (Davies, 2014; Ward, 2016). Throughout his career, he had used his status and access to young people to abuse hundreds of young children, mostly girls, across institutions like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the National Health Service (NHS), the care sector, and fundraising events. These "Savile revelations" caused unprecedented anger and introspection across British society because of the extent to which his actions had either been missed or ignored by elite institutions who wished to use him for their purposes.

A key part of Savile's ability to avoid suspicion and detection was his huge range of fundraising activities and commitment to charity work. As Savile's profile in the public eye was as the ultimate good Samaritan, or someone whom those seeking his benevolence could not risk upsetting, victims of his abuse were encouraged to stay silent when they did report his actions, often kept quiet because institutions did not want to risk losing the support of this key media personality and his fundraising prowess.

This article examines how Jimmy Savile's charity work enabled him to commit his horrific crimes. It is not a coincidence that Britain's greatest ever charity fundraiser is also its most infamous pedophile, with the former enabling his ability to be the latter for decades: Savile's charity work was largely used as a smokescreen for his abuse, or as a way to access vulnerable young people. This article is an attempt to document the role of charity in Savile's abuse and explain what it is about charity that allows it to facilitate such crimes. Previous literature on Savile discusses the charity he was famed for, but does not make it central to analysis of his actions, instead focusing on what can be learned about safeguarding (Erooga, 2018), notions of celebrity (Greer & McLaughlin, 2021), institutional failure (Greer & McLaughlin, 2013), and examinations of the case's role in "moral panics" (Cree et al., 2014; Furedi, 2013) (as these revelations did lead to both accurate and inaccurate allegations and investigations into other celebrities from the era).

Instead, this article shows how symbolic power and the social order that makes gift givers respectable (Bourdieu, 1990, 2014), and charity work which surrounds charitable individuals in a protective "good glow" (Dean, 2020), enabled Savile to commit his crimes. Building on this theoretical approach, this paper takes recent research on

the sexism, sexual harassment, and gendered exploitation that exist within fundraising and charity practices (e.g., Beaton et al., 2021; Dale & Breeze, 2022) to examine how wider social dynamics and structures such as gender inequality and sexual assault are not absent in the field of voluntary action, but are actually replicated and reinforced within it. Charity's position as a seemingly moral field of action—that engages in "moral work" that upholds and reinforces "moral values" about "desirable" human behavior and the "good society" (Garrow & Hasenfeld, 2010, p. 33)—is undercut by the presence of these issues in the sector, but often hidden or ignored because they cut against the essence of what charity is supposed to be about. Savile's reputation as an untouchable figure in terms of his generosity, provided him with the social power to commit child abuse on such a scale. This article centers Savile's work within larger sociological discussions of the symbolic power of charity at a neoliberal juncture, and how charity's central assumed characteristics of morality and goodness can protect and shroud the worst parts of human life. It stresses the importance of centering power inequalities within nonprofit studies, of which this case is an extreme example.

A Note on Method and Approach

The next section of this article contains a detailed descriptive explanation of who Jimmy Savile was, his career, fundraising, and death, before then briefly explaining how reports of his crimes emerged. This section prioritizes *description* of Savile's actions and crimes, and how his charitable works and persona enabled his abuse, for sociological reasons. In the field of ethnography, Besbris and Khan (2017) argue that there has been too much of an expectation for scholars to advance theory, rather than spend time telling their audience the novel scenes they have witnessed: to get to good analysis, we have to provide good description (Fine, 1983). Moving too quickly to analysis and "what does this mean?"-style questions, means sociologists risk missing learning about new areas of social life, and instead focus on granular incremental theory developments and the vanity of small differences and caveats (Healy, 2017). In the United Kingdom, Jimmy Savile's name has become the byword for child abuse, and institutions that protect their reputations before people. Yet few people could specifically explain exactly what Savile did, where, over what time scale, and fewer still could examine how his public presentation as the country's foremost fundraiser practically and symbolically allowed him to do this. Borrowing from Besbris and Khan's reasoning, and leaning heavily on the work of journalists like Dan Davies, the article serves a pedagogic purpose in quite plainly telling the story and explaining what happened. It is acknowledged that journalistic sources, and victim memoirs like that of Ward (2016), are not ideal in terms of establishing facts. However, that is the material we have: Because Savile's crimes were not reported until after his death, there is no court case or police investigation to fall back on. The many inquiries that took place afterward did not investigate claims of abuse—it was almost entirely taken as read that those victims who came forward were to be believed. Therefore, the "truth" of any one incident is challengeable. But the wealth of material, and the similar nature of the stories, alongside well-established contemporaneous news coverage, reveals the role

of charity in enabling Savile's abuse. This is the first place Savile's charity work has been collated and followed by sustained academic analysis.

"Dr Do-Good": Savile's Story and Charity

> The public made Jimmy Savile. It loved him. It knighted him. [. . .] For forty years people believed Savile was the hero of Stoke Mandeville Hospital and for forty years the red-top papers promoted his image as the nation's zaniest and most lovable donor. He may have abused two hundred children during that time. (O'Hagan, 2012)

Jimmy Savile was, in the words of Joan Bakewell, one of the first people "to be famous simply for being famous" (quoted in Davies, 2014, p. 305). Starting out as a dancehall operator, before becoming a household name through his work on radio at the start of the pop culture revolution of the 1960s, before extensive work in television, most famously his *Jim'll Fix It* show where he fulfilled children's dreams, his part in the firmament of British public life in the late-twentieth century is unquestioned. Space limits the opportunity for the fullest account of Savile's non-charity work here, but Dan Davies's (2014) landmark biography, which presents in horrifying detail how Savile hid "in plain sight" throughout his career, is a must-read for anyone who wants to know more. But his prominence as a charity campaigner and fundraiser is perhaps best summed up by the tribute of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who wrote as a contribution to his *This Is Your Life* celebration (Davies, 2014, p. 49), that Savile was

> an inspiring example of responsible Britain at Leeds General Infirmary, Stoke Mandeville [Hospital] and Broadmoor [secure psychiatric hospital], to name only three institutions that have benefitted from his charity compassion . . . Jimmy, I and millions more salute you. God bless you.

Davies (2014) reveals how Savile felt he knew from an early age that doing good works (helping old ladies with their shopping for instance) was beneficial to him, getting a pat on the head, as a tactic to gain trust. Later, when a DJ and dancehall operator, he liked how he had the ability to get people to do as he pleased, both in terms of being at the forefront of Britain's cultural shift, but in a more personal sense of being able to control people, whether through music or soft power, or connections to powerful institutions such as the local police. What made Savile this way? He was a sickly child who nearly died young and had a difficult relationship with his parents: "He should have really been in care. Instead, he created millions and millions of pounds for charity for lots of other people because he really didn't know who the fuck he was" (Dexter, in Davies, 2014, p. 213). He admitted to transgressions in his life (such as roughing up boys who misbehaved at his dancehalls), but he viewed his good works as credits to offset his transgressions. Few people knew, however, the true extent of these transgressions.

Savile compered The Beatles' Christmas show in London in 1964, claiming that by the end of the week the band called him "Dr Do-good" because of the amount of time

he spent promoting charitable causes. As Davies (2014, p. 221) writes, "It was a label he liked, and corresponded with how he determined the world should see him." His increasingly demonic approach to organizing his life—the fastidiousness and tight control he held over those who worked for him—meant the charity work was seen as a counterbalance, using spontaneous acts of kindness to supplement his chaotic life-style. Savile's own reflections on this mirror the words we would expect to see from any wealthy philanthropist (e.g., Breeze & Lloyd, 2013):

> I came to a crossroads. I found I was making enough money out of one or two days of work to live like a millionaire. What do you do in this situation? Do you turn into a money grabber? Or do you see if there is anybody to be helped along the way? I chose the latter path. (Savile, in Davies, 2014, p. 221)

The truth is that actually he was both a money grabber and very charitable: While he did raise millions, he was parsimonious moneywise, lived inexpensively, but would always seek the highest fees for himself possible.

In the mid-1960s, Savile was one of the first to employ embodied philanthropy (Wade et al., 2022) and use madcap charity stunts as a way to generate publicity: running 52 miles from London to Brighton to win a bet and then donating the winnings; working in a coal mine alongside his brother to raise money to buy a guide dog; running steep fell races; completing a Royal Marines endurance march to encourage teen-agers to complete long-distance charity walks, one act of a long association he had with the Marines which saw him presented with an honorary Green Beret. He orga-nized a fundraising concert for the community of Aberfan after a mining disaster killed 116 children and 28 adults, and used his celebrity to give lectures to leading figures of the Catholic Church about youth issues. He ran numerous long-distance races, charg-ing companies £10,000 to sponsor his vest. In a 5-year span in the mid-1980s, Davies (2014) estimates Savile ran 22 marathons and 44 half marathons. Through these "high-publicity moral feats," Savile reinforced his status as the "go-to celebrity" for organi-zations seeking to raise funds (Greer & McLaughlin, 2021).

In one extraordinary episode, recounted in detail by Davies (2014, pp. 236–242), the Mayor of the small Yorkshire town of Otley, invited Savile to open their annual Civic Ball. Savile responded that he would do it on six conditions: that his £200 fee was donated to a local charity; that he was given a local honor, such as a framed paint-ing of the town; some quality cigars; and a tour of the hospital. All relatively normal, except the inclusion of a hospital visit did preclude some of Savile's later crimes. However, his other two requests are remarkable: that he be given a tent in the local countryside to spend the night, and "a guard of honour of six young ladies—in another tent of course—to keep me safe" (Davies, 2014, p. 237). We know that the Mayor responded thus: "I'll organise a guard of honour of six young ladies but I won't be held to their compliance, or your safety!" To modern ears, this request and response are unbelievable, and reports from the time suggest that not every council member or father of the six selected girls was happy (one dragged his daughter away). Later, one of the girls told Davies that Savile had plied them with drink all evening while staying

sober himself, but when he entered their tent to "try it on with them," a gang of local young men attacked Savile and his minder friend, and the girls, scared and confused by the "disgusting old man" and "pervert" Savile, left.[1]

During the 1970s and 1980s, as Savile's radio and DJ celebrity began to fade, he moved his abuse toward even more vulnerable young girls, those at boarding schools, and those in hospitals. Reports in the wake of the revelations show that hospitals provided Savile with easy victims, and at the same time an audience for adulation, where staff and patients were eternally grateful for the funding he procured and the touch of celebrity he brought. Savile was given free rein in hospitals to speak to and touch patients. He also used a new radio show, where he traveled around Britain meeting ordinary people, to demonstrate his charitable prowess. This included running up a 37-story tower and pushing a 13-year-old girl in a wheelchair 24 miles to raise money for sick children. While initially focused on showing he was a man of the people, instead he was becoming *the* man of the people, the person who connected Britain's elite individuals and its institutions to the ordinary person in the street, and bridged generations and social classes. In effect, he built up a reputation as Britain's most charitable man from the late 1960s until the 1990s. In fashioning himself as an everyman saint, he blinded everyone, except his victims, and the occasional person who couldn't stand his brash personality and vulgar look. Savile exploited his status as a famous benefactor to secure access to unsuspecting and largely defenseless patients. At Leeds General Infirmary, where he had deceived the trustee board with his voluntary work, he bought the loyalty of the porters with offers of free holidays. One patient, who was sexually assaulted by Savile after undergoing spinal injury said, "I felt too frightened to report it because everyone thought he was a saint" (Davies, 2014, p. 334). As one of his victims at a boarding school, Kat Ward (2016) wrote, Savile's godlike position in the eyes of the nation meant he was untouchable, a rather eccentric and peculiar saint.

One 12-year-old girl at Stoke Mandeville reported to a nurse that Savile had hurt her, and when asked where, pointed to her vagina. The nurse said, "Don't say anything, I'll get into trouble" (Davies, 2014, p. 329). Later in life, the woman recounted how Savile had raped her, and then later that night had molested her: "it has become blindingly obvious it wasn't such a secret life after all [. . .] it seems that his behaviour was, if not well known then at the very least discussed among members of staff" (Davies, 2014, p. 331). Nurses took a resigned attitude toward his actions, put up with it, and advised girls to pretend to be asleep until he had gone. When complaints were made by student nurses after Savile had constantly entered their rooms while they were changing, Savile used his power with hospital authorities, bringing security guards to the dorms who told the nurses that if they reported the behavior they would be fired (Davies, 2014). In the mid-1970s, Savile lost a financial relationship with P&O Cruises when he was thrown off a ship after complaints from the parents of a 14-year-old girl, whom he had tried to lure back to his cabin (Davies, 2014). It's one of few examples where Savile was momentarily discomforted by people seeing his endeavors, but no institutional link-up or information sharing took place, and nothing more was made of it.

It is sometimes beyond strange when examining this case through the eyes of the safeguarding procedures of the 2020s that Savile was given so much access, and as a nonprofessional so much involvement with public sector operations (he was basically given free rein over the hospitals in which he volunteered). But he was acting as the popular vanguard for Thatcher's economic policy, encouraging personal responsibility, and the building of the public good through acts of charity and private finance rather than state investment (see Mohan, 2014). The rebuilding of Stoke Mandeville through private money and donations was to be "a pioneering example of the type of 'partnership' between government and the public that the prime minister was keen to promote" (Davies, 2014, p. 356), with Savile maintaining that it was not the duty of the government to find the money, referencing the history of private and voluntary hospitals in the United Kingdom pre-1948 (for more on the balance between public and charity funding of the NHS, see Abnett et al., 2023, and Bowles et al., 2023). His secretary Janet Cope saw Stoke Mandeville and other large public institutions (like the Leeds General Infirmary and Broadmoor) as the big beasts that Savile wanted his name attached to, where the limelight and good publicity was ensured, leading the way to a knighthood.

Savile's work at this time pioneered a lot of charitable activity that we see today. The notion of doing wacky stunts for money (sitting in a bath of baked beans, for example) emerged during this time, and the campaign "seemed to capture the imagination within every strata of society . . . the Stoke Mandeville campaign marked the opening of an era of national charity appeals" (Davies, 2014, p. 361). He understood the new media, celebrity, and how to attract people to a cause. But, horrifically, he realized that being a charitable celebrity meant questions were rarely asked, and charity could be weaponized to stop people speaking out.

Louis Theroux's Documentaries

After Savile's death and the emergence of the truth, the documentary maker Louis Theroux revisited his earlier film about Savile. In 2000, he had lived with Savile for a short period, filming him across the country to try and better know him. By his own admission, Theroux failed to truly understand Savile's hidden depths, and watching back today, one can see how talented Savile was at obfuscation, avoidance, and limiting insight into his darker core. The new documentary reveals significant details about how Savile's charity work abetted his abuse. As his secretary Janet Cope tells Theroux in 2016, Savile was a born liar, including about how many charity marathons he'd run: He would give different numbers to different journalists over the years, and none, assuming no one would lie about their charity exploits, bothered to check. Theroux's (2016) analysis leads him to conclude that

> At the time, in amongst all his bizarre qualities, Jimmy Savile's charity work had felt like his great redeeming feature. In hindsight, it was a smokescreen for his abuse and a way of getting access to vulnerable people.

Sylvia Nicol, who worked closely with Savile fundraising for Stoke Mandeville Hospital, told Theroux (2016), "Everything came to him; it was an unbelievable experience, that appeal . . . I only saw the good in Jimmy Savile." Watching, one gets the feeling her life has been ripped apart—the thing she'd given her efforts to, the thing she was proudest of in her life, had been destroyed, the memories tarnished. Her purpose was good, but she had aided and abetted a pedophile, summarizing the difficult reality of the bad charity actor: "We wouldn't have a spinal centre there now if it wasn't for Jimmy. Which would mean we wouldn't have a lot of people still alive." There are many people alive and thriving in Britain today because a pedophile used their condition as a cover to abuse children and young women with that same condition. Nicol is a good example of how Savile was able to win the good opinion of well-meaning people. His sense of personality was so strong that people could not see who he really was. When Prince Charles says at the opening of the new spinal injuries center at Stoke Mandeville in 1983, "When I think that it costs £10m—how on earth do you raise £10m in three years?!," Savile, stood beside him, is a flustering smirk of false modesty. When a *Mail on Sunday* journalist, Angela Levin, was informed by a nurse at Stoke Mandeville that Savile would abuse paralyzed little girls, she did not raise suspicions because of a lack of concrete evidence and because, "The libel laws were very strong. He was extremely connected. He raised £30m [*sic*]—he could threaten to not raise another penny. You'd have to be a very brave paper to do that" (Theroux, 2016). DJ Paul Gambaccini recounts one time in which a newspaper was preparing to run a story on one of Savile's crimes, that Savile's response was to say, ". . . if you do there goes the funds for Stoke Mandeville. Do you want to be responsible for the drying up of the charity donations?" (Davies, 2014, p. 384). In one published press story, Savile was accused of being "derogatory to patients" a claim which Savile challenged and won an apology and compensation for. As Theroux responded in 2000, "That seems a bit rich for them to accuse you of being derogatory towards patients given how much money you're raised" (Theroux, 2016). Theroux, perhaps understandably, had accepted the narrative that someone who fundraises for good causes can do no wrong, showing how charity offers the instant riposte, the "good glow" offering an easy means of deflection. But as Longmore (2016) demonstrates in his work on telethons, the rather limited behavior of being derogatory to those you are helping is pretty common, especially in the arena of disability charities, with a long litany of areas where key figures like telethon host Jerry Lewis demeaned and patheticized the children he was supposed to be empowering.

The Presence of Charity in Post-Revelation Reports

After his death, as reports began to swirl and come out, it was clear that many, many people had known about Savile's offenses throughout the previous 50 years, but had chosen not to report them for various reasons, especially his fundraising prowess and the "good glow" that brought him. Merion Jones, the BBC producer who was one of the first to start digging into Savile after his death, was a child when his aunt was Headmistress as Duncroft, a school for girls who had been expelled elsewhere or were

considered troublemakers. Savile would regularly drive to the school, bringing records and cigarettes for the girls, and he would offer them drives around in his Rolls-Royce. Jones remembers his parents at the time warning his aunt that this was inappropriate, that Savile was a "50-year-old guy and these are underage girls," but the Headmistress would merely reply "He's a friend of the school," seeing the benefits Savile brought—media attention, fundraising—as enough to quash any suspicion. In 1973, the controller of Radios 1 and 2 asked an assistant to see if the rumors about Savile's behavior were true. Four journalists confirmed that they had heard the rumors but would not be printing them because of Savile's popularity and his charity work (Davies, 2014). As one victim said,

> [I]t's really sad that someone can work their whole life for charity and everyone's like, "He's such a wonderful person," and there's silly old [me] sitting at home and she knows he's not a wonderful person [. . .] He does paedo stuff under the guise of charity, it's almost like he's above the law, untouchable. (Levitt, 2013, pp. 26–27)

Story after story emerged, of women accusing Savile of assaulting and raping them in the hospitals where they were being treated when they were young. Part of the reason victims were so forthcoming after his death was that they were deeply angry at the eulogizing and admiration being sent his way, yet as cases and reports grew, former police officers investigating the crimes found that some potential victims still had a genuine fear about coming forward due to Jimmy Savile's connections (Davies, 2014). The phrase "in plain sight" is used a lot. It is the title of Davies' book, and also was the phrase used by then Director General of the BBC Lord Tony Hall, who, when responding to inquiry findings into both Savile and the presenter Stuart Hall (who was jailed in 2013 after admitting indecently assaulting 13 girls in his career) admitted that a serial rapist and a predatory sexual abuser both hid in plain sight at the organization for decades (BBC, 2016). Dame Janet Smith's (2016) report found that when a series of newspaper allegations into potential abuse and corruption by Savile at the BBC emerged in 1971, the corporation investigated the corruption but not the abuse. Smith's report finds that the BBC cared more for its reputation than its young audience, whom it deemed necessary but a nuisance.

This focus on protecting reputation ahead of protecting children was also apparent in the charity sphere. When the allegations first emerged a year after his death, trustees of the Jimmy Savile Charitable Trust were quick to point out that damage to his name and brand may negatively affect those charitable institutions (see Ross, 2012). Similarly, when it was first reported that the BBC Newsnight investigation into Savile had been dropped, the journalists involved were initially accused of "muckraking" by the Savile family, and friends of his said simply that he was a great man "who should be remembered for all the wonderful things he did for other people" (Davies, 2014, p. 110).

In total, there were over 70 institutional reports into Savile's actions (Erooga, 2018). There were 44 reports published by various NHS Trusts and hospitals into their connections with Savile, seeking to understand how he had been given such privileged access (see BBC, 2015; Erooga, 2018). While it is hard to be precise, it is estimated up

to 1,000 children were abused by Savile over his lifetime. The UK Government at the time acknowledged that previous Conservative administrations, in their desperation to make use of Savile's charity as a politicized forefront to their economic policy, bypassed good safeguarding procedures and common sense:

> There is no suggestion that Ministers or officials knew about those activities, but accepted governance processes were not followed in the decision to allow Savile to acquire and maintain a position of authority at [Stoke Mandeville] hospital. In particular, Ministers made the expedient decision to use Savile not just to raise funds to redevelop Stoke Mandeville's national spinal injuries centre but to oversee the building and running of the centre, even though he had no relevant experience. Because of his celebrity and useful fundraising skills, the right questions—the hard questions—simply were not asked. Suspicions were not acted on, and patients and staff were ignored. People were either too dazzled or too intimidated by the nation's favourite celebrity to confront the evil predator we now know he was. Never again must the power of money or celebrity blind us to repeated, clear signals such as those that suggested that some extremely vulnerable people were being abused. (Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt MP, 26 February 2015, Hansard, vol 593, col 484)

He was "in a position of trust, that trust having been acquired as a result of his fame and his charity work" (Levitt, 2013, p. 88). If wealth, fame, and perceived generosity continue to be prestigious symbols that lead to the bypassing of good process, such issues will continue. "Never again" became the mantra of public figures. The historic nature of much of the abuse made that a swallowable "line to take" in institutional terms. But, as the following discussion section shows, centering Savile's work within larger sociological discussions of the symbolic role of charity, and neoliberalism, we can see how charity's central symbolic characteristics of morality and goodness can protect and shroud criminal behavior, and keep young women in danger.

Discussion

Philanthropy, Fundraising, and the "Good Glow" Power of Charity

> Jimmy Savile had discovered that people would do pretty much anything for him because of what he did for charity. (Davies, 2014, p. 260)

Critical charity and philanthropy studies have grown in focus in recent years (see Eikenberry et al., 2019). Stimulated both by a concern that overly managerialist and neocorporatist approaches to studying voluntary action had led to an unquestioning attitude to the place of giving in society and the unequal power relations revealed by large-scale philanthropy alongside a failure to diversify in theory (Coule et al., 2022) and method (Dean & Wiley, 2022), these studies have examined the social relationships, unequal power relations, and problematic motivations within giving. These include a focus on the social and political issues that emerge with reliance on foundations (McGoey, 2015), donations and tax abuse (Reich, 2018), the problematic organization of the international aid field (Krause, 2014), the misuse of charitable

trust (McCormack, 2020), and, key for us here, the role of charity in reputation management and laundering (Burgess et al., 2018; Dean, 2020; Giridharadas, 2018; Radden Keefe, 2021).

Power is often obscured by institutions and social structures, like gender, or charity. The theoretical framework of the "good glow" (Dean, 2020) within charity studies draws on Bourdieu's (1979, 1989) theory of symbolic power and Andreoni's (1990) theory of the warm glow, to argue that not only do charitable people benefit from inner happiness and warmth that comes from giving, but their giving also surrounds them in a halo-like shield of altruistic reputation that can be consciously put to use. Such a theoretical model centers the social reaction to acts of charity, and how that reaction plays out in the internal monologue and behavior of the charitable individual. The fact that giving is a revered social action imbued with symbolic power means there is prestige to being a donor and enables individuals to present as better than they actually are. Bourdieu shows how respect is commanded rather than earned because of social status, operationalized through an obsequiousness paid to existing social order, and reinforced by authority: Symbolic power is reinforced by that authority (see Dean, 2020, pp. 11–15). People use "symbolic strategies" (Bourdieu, 1989) to impose their vision of the social world and their position in that world on others around them, visions that are self-interested. Building on Mauss's (2011) work on the dangerous retributional power of gifts, Bourdieu sees return gifts as obligatory and expected. As he writes, gifts are characterized by their ambiguity, "experienced (or intended) as a refusal of self-interest and egoistic calculation [yet] no one is really unaware of the logic of exchange" (Bourdieu, 1997, pp. 231–232). Participants are aware of ulterior motives, and that the giver expects to be recompensed at some point in some way. As Radden Keefe's (2021) extraordinary work on the Sackler family's use of philanthropy as a pre-emptive guard against their immoral actions within the pharmaceutical industry shows in particular, generosity is immensely powerful, and even malicious in the wrong hands.

Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Power in the Nonprofit Sector

As part of these wider concerns, feminist theory and method are increasingly applied within charity studies (e.g., Dale & Breeze, 2022; Gillespie et al., 2019; Hardner & Wolf, 2022; Lau, 2022). Many of these empirical works seek to document women and girls' continued discrimination or abuse in the charity sector. Dale and Breeze (2022) document how the female-dominated fundraising workforce keep nonprofit organizations financially afloat, but that female fundraisers face relentless undermining from everyday "micro-aggressions" to explicit sexual harassment. Allied to this is the work of Beaton et al. (2021), who show how "resource dependency" within charities pressures female fundraisers and other staff into uncomfortable, improper, or abusive engagements with wealthy donors. Beaton and colleagues speak to fundraisers required to approach powerful donors, and find that contextual factors within the charity sector (such as the need to build relationships and the power donors have over organizations) enable sexual harassment to occur, problems that were often exacerbated by nonprofit

employers (unintentionally and intentionally) placing fundraisers in vulnerable, compromising, and exploitative situations with donors. Female fundraisers report being used as "bait," effectively prostituted by their bosses to please wealthy donors who would give a million dollars "for a chance to get with her." The authors argue that nonprofits who desperately need donations often have a powerless relationship with donors (see Ostrander, 1989) which means they have to focus on ends rather than means, and accept hurtful behavior or ask their staff to perform social roles they (sometimes, but not always) acknowledge they should not have to.

As previously recounted, it is credibly reported that Savile was confident enough in 1967 to ask local government officials to *pay him* in access to local girls for charitable endeavors. Local government officials, despite some consternation, agreed. The overtness and brazenness of the request and the agreement by local leaders is shocking, but is not so different to scantily-clad women tending the flag at charity golf tournaments, or events organized with the direction to: "Make sure all the ticket sellers are really cute, maybe put them in little short skirts and they can go around and sit on the guys' laps to sell tickets. That way we'll sell a lot of tickets" (Beaton et al., 2021)? Or is it that different to the Presidents Club dinner (Marriage, 2018; Marriage & Wood, 2019)—described approvingly by the male host of the fundraising auction as the "most un-PC event of the year"—where 130 hostesses, made to dress in skimpy black outfits with matching underwear and high heels were told to accompany and entertain the wealthy male attendees, where many of the women (after being made to sign a non-disclosure agreement) were groped, sexually harassed, subject to lewd comments, and propositioned through requests to join male attendees at hotel rooms upstairs? At the event, hostesses reported men frequently putting hands up their skirts, with one young woman recounting how during the evening an attendee exposed his penis to her (Marriage, 2018).

Previous work (Dean, 2020) examines charity's role as a non-neutral, symbolic activity, revealing how its ability to reward the charitable individual with prestige and honor can be used by the malevolent to hide their wrongdoing. What we can see here is the transactional nature of charity's "good glow," the ability to say, "I will do this nice beneficial thing for you, but I expect something in return," whether that's social prestige, one's name on a building, or in the cases documented above, access to vulnerable women and girls. Usually, this social transaction is unwritten and unsaid, something that happens organically through contacts, and networks, and reputation building (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Burgess et al., 2018). But when that charitable cause eclipses morality and good sense, we are left with a situation where the giving of material wealth (or the time required to fundraise that material wealth) is more powerful than the accumulation of material wealth itself, as it serves, in Bourdieusian terms, the power to secure recognition (Bourdieu, 1990), or in Savile's case, the power to be left alone, exalted, and unquestioned. This is not to position charity work as the singular factor that facilitates abuse; various forms of power, privilege, and systems of oppression facilitate sexual violence and silence it when it occurs. Complex power relations based on gender, race, age, class, sexuality, and ability fuel and maintain cultures of rape and sexual violence within and outside of institutional spaces. Large

amounts of literature focus on those practices, and space does not allow for a full account of that material here, nor is it my central point. Charity or nonprofit sector research is only now centering power inequalities as a key disciplinary issue. Savile's crimes are both individual actions, but his violence was also part of broader systems of power and oppression, where celebrities, in a culture of unquestioning approbation, are one group more able to avoid detection.

Neoliberalism and Elite Power

Neoliberalism has had a well-documented influence on nonprofit action and fundraising (see, for example, Alexander & Fernandez, 2021; Dean, 2015; Eikenberry & Mirabella, 2018). Beaton et al.'s (2021) positioning of sexual harassment within the framework of resource dependence demonstrates how money trumps ethics when the bottom line is all that matters. Savile's fundraising work for Stoke Mandeville Hospital acted as a vanguard for Margaret Thatcher's economic policies, where the state's power has been harnessed by capital, centered on safeguarding the market, not the common good (Phipps, 2020). The symbolic power of charity can play a significant role in the exploitation of vulnerable individuals under increasingly neoliberal conditions for nonprofit fundraising, because care gets side-lined in favor of success. As Richard Sennett (1998, p. 148) put it in *The Corrosion of Character*, the rugged individualism of flexible neoliberal capitalism "provide[s] human beings no deep reasons to care about one another." It is perhaps not a coincidence that Savile was able to get away with so much abuse during the very timeframe when neoliberalism was ascending rapidly in the West, just as "lad culture" and "rape culture" have flourished recently as "problematic forms of masculinity are framed and legitimized by the structures and rationalities" of neoliberalism (Phipps et al., 2018, p. 5). The heroic, individual do-gooder or fundraiser is a neoliberal figure, protected by the glow of giving, urgently in need of critique and challenge.

Although perhaps the most extreme example of the way charity's symbolic power can blind the recipient's and wider society, Savile was not a one-off. The crimes of loved British media personalities like Stuart Hall or Rolf Harris, or powerful U.S. media figures like Harvey Weinstein, alongside the wider #metoo movement in show business and child abuse revelations in U.K. soccer (see Taylor, 2017), show that sexual abuse in institutions where there is a gulf in power and the powerful have cultural cache are widespread. In their journalistic investigations into Weinstein, both Kantor and Twohey (2019) and Farrow (2019) reveal how Weinstein weaponized his philanthropy and giving to AIDS causes to distract and distance himself from allegations of abuse. More recently, the case of convicted sex offender, abuser, and trafficker Jeffrey Epstein has shown how Savile's case is not isolated. Friend or close associate of Duke of York Prince Andrew, former U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton and Donald Trump, and philanthropist Bill Gates, Epstein was a committed philanthropist, to universities such as Harvard, Princeton, and MIT. Considered academic analysis of Epstein will emerge in the coming years, but this present article has shown that his charity and the reputation management he conducted through his foundation (Eder & Goldstein, 2019)

should be part of exploring the "good glow" halo effect of how so many individuals were taken in by him, and the relationship of his abuse to his charity. After his conviction for "procuring a child for prostitution" and of soliciting a prostitute (a crime for which he served only 13 months, in generally ultra-low security prisons, including day release), Epstein's charitable foundation was instrumental in his attempts to "launder" his reputation (Giridharadas, 2018)—just as Savile's charity work provided him a layer of insurance (Davies, 2014). While much of the discussion of Savile has centered on the "different time" of the 1970s and 1980s, the case of Epstein shows that wealth, charity, and elite status continue to blind associates, or bind them from speaking, with individuals like Gates and Prince Andrew continuing to meet with Epstein *after his convictions.* Power, celebrity magnetism, and donations and charity fundraising make a lot of people stupid, abet abuse, and cause unparalleled harm.

It would obviously be unhelpful and incorrect to conclude that all grand fundraising gestures are diversions from serious crimes. However, the nonprofit sector is very quickly learning that its ability to ignore wider social processes because of its self-propagating perception as a safe haven of goodness are severely wide of the mark. As Sean O'Neill, the *Times* journalist whose stories uncovered the Oxfam Haiti abuse scandal and cover-up (O'Neill, 2018; see Charity Commission, 2019) said in the aftermath, there had been a code of silence in the international aid sector, which was protected and cosseted due to its apparent goodness. Jimmy Savile, more than anyone else, benefited from that same code of silence.

Lessons for Practice

There were many "lessons learned" style reviews after the Savile revelations and multiple investigations (see Lampard & Marsden, 2015). All expressed institutional horror at what had been allowed to happen, and were clear that, while safeguarding processes today were much more stringent as a result of both social and sectoral attitudinal change, there was still work to do (as the more recent examples listed here demonstrate). Some U.K. media reports (Allsop, 2018) found that across the charity sector trustees were far from consistent in how seriously they took safeguarding concerns, and even organizations that have thorough processes still need to look beyond safeguarding and protection as a "tick-box" exercise and have it embedded within lived practice and culture. The prioritization of recruiting trustees with financial connections and fundraising expertise means there may be a lack of focus and resources on the issue of safeguarding, so correcting that at board level should be a priority, especially in charity fields that do not have strong secondary regulators. Erooga (quoted in Allsop, 2018) also feels that reference processes for new hires in the charity sector have to put protection for children or the vulnerable above legal protection for the organization, a key factor in enabling the Oxfam Haiti and wider international aid sector abuse scandal.

The recent Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA, 2022, p. 1), emerging from multiple allegations and reports of cover-ups, including the Savile revelations, estimates that in the United Kingdom one in six girls and one in 20 boys experience

child sexual abuse before the age of 16, and that around 3.1 million adults in England and Wales had experienced sexual abuse before the age of 16. These figures are worsened by a culture of silence and shame encouraged by institutions: Historically, "inadequate measures were in place to protect children from the risk of being sexually abused" and "individuals and institutions often thought children were lying when they tried to disclose what was being done to them" (IICSA, 2022, p. 1). As a result, the main recommendation from the inquiry is the introduction of a statutory requirement of mandatory reporting, which would "require individuals in certain employments (paid or voluntary) and professions to report allegations of child sexual abuse to the relevant authorities" (IICSA, 2022, p. 16). Such a recommendation should be welcomed by the charity sector. While volunteers working with children and voluntary groups are already hard to recruit, and such an extra burden or threat of prosecution may be too much risk for others to take, it cannot be considered anything other than malevolent practice in the twenty-first century to not let the responsible authority know when an allegation is made, even if against a fellow volunteer, colleague, or "well-meaning" charitable citizen. The report's other recommendations are equally serious, well-thought out, and require hard work and investment from central government. But the report was released during a period of U.K. government uncertainty—It is perhaps one the most important public documents in the last decade, and it received minimal attention because of Westminster chaos. While children's support services have been attacked and defunded since 2010 in the United Kingdom, the idea that this report will stimulate a statutory commitment to the joy and safety of childhood is highly unlikely.

Conclusion

This article is an attempt to document the role of charity in Jimmy Savile's abuse and explain what it is about charity that allows it to enable such crimes. All previous analyses of Savile's work mention the charity he was famed for but have yet to make it central to their analysis, instead focused on safeguarding, institutional failure, celebrity, and "moral panics." This is the first academic examination wholly centered on the role his charity and giving played in his crimes and ability to abuse children (a short section within Greer & McLaughlin, 2021 notwithstanding). As part of a growing critical literature on the realities of charitable giving for reputation building and protection, it is hoped this piece serves as useable case study for teaching and learning, and extra evidence to the symbolic power of charity theoretical framework, particularly as critical work on civil society elites grows (see Maclean et al., 2021; Scaramuzzino, 2020). Charity has received notably little attention in mainstream sociology and cultural sociology. But the symbolic power that being a significant giver, fundraiser, and charitable individual provides can be as powerful as that which comes from wealth or political power. A deeper sociological study of charity is required, especially if neoliberal welfare trends mean that approaches to financing public services through innovations such as social finance continue (Rosenman, 2019). Elite philanthropy that bound up with the exercise of power and bestowing esteem on the

character of the person providing the gift is inherently risky in a world where institutional abuse is an ongoing and ubiquitous social problem (McAlinden, 2018). "Saviles" are thankfully uncommon, and we should avoid seeing darkness in every giving heart—but they are far more common than the sector likes to admit sometimes, and safeguarding is a constant process, not an occasional distraction when its uppermost in our thoughts.

Acknowledgments

Data Availability Statement

There is no data set applicable to this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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Note

1. Space does not allow for further examples, but this is not the only occasion when Savile attempted this approach (Davies, 2014, pp. 244, 260).

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