THERAPISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES OF MALE SEX OFFENDERS

by

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Abstract

There are indications that sex offending behaviors begin to develop in childhood, and are influenced by the experiences sex offenders have as children. Traumatic sexual abuse is one type of experience known to contribute to sex offending behavior, but non-traumatic experiences may also influence this behavior. This study was conducted to determine what childhood experiences therapists perceived as impacting the development of sex offending behavior in males.

This qualitative study employed purposeful sampling techniques. A sampling frame of 18 therapists in private practice, who were known to work with male sex offenders, were sent a letter describing the study and asking for their participation. Of these 5 male therapists responded and were interviewed. A semi-structured interview guide was employed; all interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Each of the therapists taking part in this study had at least 2 years experience working with sex offenders, and 3 of them had 7 or more years experience. Each of the therapists interviewed had attained at least a Masters degree and two had Ph.D.'s in psychology. The clients seen by these therapists because of their sex offending behavior ranged in age from 4 to 80 years. Four of the five therapists also provided services to male survivors of sexual abuse.
Qualitative methods of content analysis were employed. Three categories and one over-riding theme described the data. The three categories support an ecological approach. Therapists identified factors at an individual, family environmental, and cultural level of experience which they perceive as influencing the development of sex offending behavior. Therapists described this development as an evolutionary process and believed that childhood experiences influence that process. An ecological model describing this process is presented.

A number of limitations are discussed which preclude the possibility of forming firm conclusions. However, this data corroborates other studies which suggest that childhood experiences influence the development of sex offending behavior, and that this behavior begins to manifest itself in childhood. Implications arising from this study support the notion that further research is needed in this area. This study also argues that identifying childhood experiences which influence the development of male sex offending behaviors can lead to more effective and proactive interventions. Changing sex offending patterns of behavior in male children may be a much easier task than treating those behaviors when they have become entrenched in adults.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Question:
What Childhood Experiences are Perceived by Therapists as Having an Impact on their Male Clients Becoming Sex Offenders?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the question under study in this thesis, and the purpose for asking it. Assumptions are inherent to all questions. The assumptions underlying the question posed here will be delineated. A section defining terms germane to this study is also included in this chapter. An overview of the subsequent chapters will be presented.

This study is concerned with outlining, from an ecological perspective, those childhood experiences which therapists perceive as affecting the development of sexual aggression in males. The therapists interviewed worked with adult, adolescent and child offenders offending against adults, adolescents and children. Given the overwhelming evidence indicating that in excess of 90% of sex crimes are perpetrated by men, male gender terms are used when
referring to sex offenders, (Finkelhor and Browne 1986 and Badgley 1984). Consequently, this study will concern itself with male sex offenders and their development and not with female offenders and their development. This study is gender specific and is concerned with whether common themes can be identified which characterize the childhood experiences of male sex offenders and if so how might they contribute to the development of sexual aggression later in life. By way of illustration, one theory of sex offending behavior postulates that today's offenders were yesterday's victims. The evidence suggests that some male victims do go on to become offenders and, in some cases, there are striking similarities between the offenses committed and the abuse suffered. Some form of re-enactment seems to be a hallmark, most notably with the fixated pedophile whose abuse of children mirrors his own victimization (Groth, Hobson and Gary, 1982). Some offenders seem not to have been sexually abused, while many men abused as children do not go on to abuse others (Breer, 1987). This illustrates the complexity of sexual aggression and suggests that a variety of experiences play a part in the development of this behavior.
This study argues that asking offenders if they were sexually abused as children is asking too narrow a question. Instead, we must broaden the questions we ask to determine what childhood experiences sex offenders have in common. Keeping in mind that this study represents a beginning search for new questions upon which to base new hypotheses rather than a test of new hypotheses, it is appropriate to question therapists who treat sex offenders rather than the offenders themselves. The respondents who took part in this study were selected in the belief that their experiences in working with a wide range of sex offenders would enable them to see the broader perspective.

One of the strengths of social work is its willingness to view a problem in a broader context than the individual. Ecological perspectives, which attempt to blend individual, familial, and cultural components can strengthen our understanding of sex offenders and lead to a wider array of solutions.

Sex offenders have largely been studied as individuals. Great efforts have been made to match particular types of crimes to particular types of individuals. The crime is seen within the context of the individual, but the
individual is not seen within the context of his life experiences. This study takes a developmental and ecological approach, viewing the perpetrator and his crime in the context of his experiences, including childhood experiences. If common themes do exist and can be identified, then it seems likely that more proactive programs can be developed to prevent the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors linked to sex offending behavior from developing.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to explore with therapists the extent to which they perceive childhood experiences as impacting the process of becoming a sex offender. Identifying which experiences they perceive as most important could lead to the formulation of questions deserving further study.

**Underlying Assumptions:**

In considering the research question, what childhood experiences are perceived by therapists as having an impact on their clients becoming sex offenders, a number of assumptions need to be delineated. A central assumption is
that sex offenders have childhood experiences different from non-sex offenders and those experiences have a bearing on the development of healthy sexual relationships. Healthy sexuality refers to the ability to enter an intimate, physical and non-coercive relationship based on reciprocity. This study also assumes that sexuality is a developmental process beginning in childhood. Sexuality can be conceptualized as patterns of behavior which become better organized and more sophisticated over time. These behaviors encompass both the physical aspects of sex and the emotional connectedness necessary to form intimate relationships. Healthy sexuality is seen as a developmental process which depends not only on physical maturity, but on emotional, and psychological wellness. Finally this study assumes that sex offending behavior is learned, and that this learning begins in childhood and is guided by the experiences children have.

These assumptions suggest that to construct theories about sex offending behavior taking place now, we must investigate the offender's past to understand what experiences set the person on this particular developmental path. Together these assumptions suggest that personality formation is a product of experience. This notion, however,
fails to account for individual differences, and more specifically how experience becomes interpreted and translated into behavior. The assumption that patterns of behavior, in reflecting past experiences, are tempered by the way those experiences are interpreted, adds the necessary sophistication to the process. This process is referred to as the dynamic construction of meaning.

In considering sources of childhood experience and the dynamic construction of meaning, it is apparent the family context in which the child is raised plays an important role. Families are seen as the primary sources of early influence and the socialization of children begins here. As the child grows the peer group becomes more influential, but the family is clearly important in forming the foundation upon which the developmental process begins. Dynamic interactions which take place within families are significant contributors to how children interpret their experiences. As children develop, they become exposed to experiences that reflect the cultural mores of society and these play a part in how meaning is derived. So, while recognizing that committing of a sex offense is ultimately an individual action, and that the perpetrator is wholly
responsible for his behavior, the perpetrator's behavior is viewed within the context of his life, including childhood experiences.

In summary, sexuality, as a developmental process, is organized and expressed in patterns of behavior which reflect both the experiences and the meanings ascribed to those experiences. It is reasonable to assume that male sex offenders have experiences and/or interpretations different from non-offenders.

**Definitions:**

The terms and definitions as used in this paper are presented below. Some of the definitions are quite common while others are idiosyncratic.

**Therapists**: individuals working in a private therapy practice who have at least two years experience working with sex offenders and who are educated to at least a Masters degree level.

**Perceptions**: thoughts and beliefs about sex offenders derived from a variety of sources including: knowledge gained through the experience of working with sex offenders; knowledge gained through academic education about sex
offenders; knowledge gained through professional development about sex offenders.

**Childhood**: from birth to and including age 18.

**Experience**: events or circumstances, either one time or ongoing, to which a child is exposed, participated in, or observed.

**Sex offenders**: males, regardless of age, who engage in sexual behavior described in the Criminal Code of Canada.

**Sexual abuse**: the use of psychological and or physical power by someone to gain sexual gratification at another's expense. Sexual abuse as defined above and as used in this paper encompasses all sex offenses covered by the Criminal Code of Canada. This definition recognizes that sexual abuse can occur at the hands of adults or children where charges are not laid. For example, where the perpetrator is under 12 years of age and/or when the victim is too young to make an accurate statement.

**Sexually Intrusive Behavior**: refers to sexual behavior engaged in by children containing elements of coercion and which is developmentally inappropriate. The age differential between perpetrator and victim is often not significant.
Sexual offenses: those acts delineated in the Criminal Code of Canada (Rodriques, 1990), under the following sections:

Section 151: Sexual interference refers to the sexual touching of a person under the age of fourteen.

Section 152: Invitation to sexual touching. This section makes it illegal to encourage a person under fourteen to touch someone else for a sexual purpose.

Section 153: Sexual exploitation. This section combines sections 151 and 152 but extends the age from under 14 up to 18 providing the perpetrator is a person who is in a position of trust and authority over the young person or is a person upon whom the young person is dependent.

Section 155: Incest refers to sexual intercourse between blood relations including: parent / child, sibling, grandparent / grandchild, and half brother / half sister. By referring to blood relationships this section seems to leave out other relationships that reflect the evolving family. For example sexual intercourse between a step father and his step child.

Section 173: Exposure refers to the commission of an indecent act with the intent to insult or offend another
person, or who for a sexual purpose exposes his genitals to a person under the age of 14.

Assault refers to the application of intentional force either directly or indirectly including threats, showing a weapon, and without the consent of the victim.

Section 271: Sexual Assault involves the same criteria as for assault and involves a sexual part of the body.

Section 272: Sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm. This section differs from the previous section by boosting the possible sentence from 10 to 14 years as a way of taking into account the degree and type of coercion used by the perpetrator.

Section 273: Aggravated sexual assault is considered more serious still and may be punished by life in prison. In the commission of the sexual assault the perpetrator has, in the case of aggravated sexual assault maimed, wounded, disfigured or endangered the life of the victim.

The Criminal Code of Canada was chosen as a source for definitions because the vast majority of sex offenders seen by therapists are adjudicated. The above sections of the Criminal Code establish the parameters of deviant sexual behavior displayed by the clients of the respondents
interviewed for this thesis. Using Criminal Code definitions maintains congruency of terms between respondent and researcher.

**Overview:**

The literature reviewed in chapter two is organized chronologically and makes the distinction between pre and post seventies research. The literature generated prior to the 1970's was informed largely by Freud's psycho-analytic theory. During the seventies this theory became richer for the critique offered by others, especially feminist researchers. Feminist researchers focused attention on the cultural influences on socialization and the power inequalities which exist for women and children within the social context of families and society. The perspectives developed by Freud and Erikson are highlighted, but other developmental psychologists are presented as well.

The second section presents the literature from the 1970's onward. Beginning in the late 1960's and early 1970's new paradigms for understanding sex offenders were developed, including a feminist analysis which brought the issue of sex abuse to the public's collective consciousness. This successfully critiqued the psychoanalytic perspective
which had held sway until then. Feminist analysis opened the debate on sexual abuse which encouraged the development of other perspectives, including a learning perspective and a family systems perspective. Feminists were also instrumental in adding to our knowledge about the effects of trauma, (Herman, 1992;Terr, 1990) and, in so doing, strengthened and humanized the psychoanalytic perspective. The literature presented in this section is organized by the theoretical perspective from which it derives. Some researchers argue that the complexity of the task of understanding sex crimes demands ecological models capable of integrating the strengths of the differing models so far delineated. Three of these models will also be discussed.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study and its rationale. This qualitative study is exploratory in nature. In focusing on the childhood experiences of sex offenders it is hoped that this work will generate new questions and new ways of thinking about sex offenders and how they come to be.

Chapter four presents the study results. Therapists working with male sex offenders perceive childhood experiences as formative. The data generated fell into
three main areas: the respondents identified contributing factors at individual, family and cultural levels. The results from this study support the work by Finklehor, (1984); Faller, (1988); and Wolf, (1985) who argue that single factor models lack the sophistication necessary to explain sex offending behavior. There is also some question, unresolved in this study, about whether an ecological perspective guides the delivery of treatment or whether treatment of sex offenders is still guided by single factor theories. It appears that ecological models which examine the sex offender's individual pathology, while not losing sight of the environmental influences at both the family and cultural level, will ultimately provide us with better understanding of sex offenders.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction:

This chapter, in examining the literature pertinent to "Therapists' perceptions of the childhood experiences of sex offenders", is organized to examine the literature from a pre and post 1970's perspective. This division is useful because, during the 1970's, the theoretical perspective on this issue was broadened by feminist theorists. They shifted the focus from a psychoanalytic perspective which saw sex offenses as primarily an intrapersonal problem, to attend to cultural factors which contribute to sex offenses. Others were influencing and broadening the understanding of child development. Erikson (1950) although pre 1970's, emphasized the importance of environment, and presented children as social beings. The psychology of self and object relations, as presented by Kohut (1977) challenged Freud's (1947) belief in sex and aggression as primary drives, and argued the importance of empathic parenting and self-esteem. Cognitive psychologists described
children integrating information and attempting to make sense of that information.

The literature is ordered chronologically, with short discussions of the theoretical frameworks upon which it is based. Understanding the frameworks which guided the research examined in this chapter will help delineate the links between experiences in childhood and psychological well-being later in life. How researchers perceive a problem, and the questions they develop to explore that problem, are directed and limited by the theoretical perspective they hold. The trend, as this chapter will demonstrate, is toward the development of ecological theories which encompass a number of perspectives. The theories examined posit influence at either an individual, familial, cultural, and ecological level.

**Developmental Theories:**

From a developmental perspective, this study is concerned with identifying experiential childhood themes that may prove to have explanatory power in understanding why some men commit sex offenses. The theoretical frameworks developed by Freud and Erikson will be presented
in some detail, while other developmental frameworks will be presented in somewhat less detail.

**Freud's Psycho-sexual Theory:**

Freud's Psycho-sexual Theory, (1947) described childhood development as an orderly progression through increasingly more sophisticated stages. His theory argues certain instincts are inborn; the most powerful of which is the sex instinct. Freud's theory was developed at a time when the physical sciences were exploring the transfer of energy through hydraulics. He incorporated these ideas by suggesting that libidinal energy was concentrated at different points in the body, depending on the maturity of the child.

The oral stage, from birth to one year, saw the libido concentrated in the oral area, and thus we see children at this age exploring the world and receiving pleasure by sucking, chewing and spitting.

From age one to three, libido shifts to the anal region and children learn control over their sphincter muscles.

From ages three to six, children derive pleasure from their genital region as they learn that touching their
This stage, which Freud termed the phallic stage, is important because gender stability occurs during this time. The task is for boys to shift their identification from mother to father and for girls to cement their identification to mother.

During the next six years, which Freud termed the latency stage, children use their same sex parent as a role model. Males during this stage would be particularly vulnerable to the modelling behavior of their fathers.

The last stage in Freud's developmental theory is the genital stage. This stage begins around age 12 and coincides with the onset of puberty. During this period the sexual reproductive system is maturing and libidinal energy is invested in forming friendships, preparing for a career, and finding a mate.

Another component of Freud's developmental work was his description of personality formation. Freud, (1964) postulated that personality is made up of three components. At birth, personality is all id. Id, according to Freud, is that part of our personality concerned with the gratification of pleasure. As a newborn's needs are met, energy can shift and the ego develops.
Ego is that part of the personality which is governed by the reality principal and must both control and satisfy the demands of the id. Where id can be conceptualized as the drive to act impulsively, ego is the first line of impulse control. The ego controls impulse in part by calling on the super-ego for moral guidance.

At around age three the super-ego begins to emerge according to the child's cognitive ability to internalize the moral codes taught by parents. In discussing Freud's formulation of personality, Shaffer (1985) describes the mature and healthy personality as,

a dynamic set of checks and balances: the id communicates basic needs, the ego restrains the impulsive id long enough to find realistic ways of meeting these needs and the superego decides whether the ego's problem solving strategies are morally acceptable (pg. 46).

Many of Freud's female patients, reported memories of sexual abuse. Freud (1896) presented a paper to his peers in which he argued that pre-mature sexualization of female children was traumatic and resulted in hysteria later in life. His views were ridiculed and he was ostracized. In
1905 Freud recanted the seduction theory and advanced the theory that the memories of sexual abuse reported by his female clients were in fact unfulfilled fantasies, Masson (1984). The belief that children act to seduce adults to fulfill this fantasy has long been used to rationalize the sexual abuse of children.

In his review of the literature on sex offenders, Karpman (1954) credits Freud's Psycho-sexual Developmental Theory for providing researchers with an understanding of personality formation. He argues that without a theory to understand the formation of personality there was no way of developing the questions that can lead to an understanding of personality formation gone awry, nor can there be effective treatment for sex offenders.

Sex offenders were seen as having personality characteristics which lead them to behave in ways considered aberrant. Very few researchers during the period from 1910 to 1970 believed sex offenders met the legal definition of insanity, but rather described them as having maladjusted personalities. Hartwell (1950) found that the majority of those who commit sex offenses were not legally insane, but neither were they normal. The most common labels ascribed
to sex offenders were psychopathic and neurotic. A third label, abnormal sexual impulses, is common to both (Bromberg, 1940; Abrahamsen, 1950; and Apfelberg, Sugar and Pfeffer, 1944).

The psychopathic sex offender was generally seen as rejecting community standards of right and wrong, and impulsively acting to meet his own needs without regard for the pain and suffering inflicted on his victims. Karpman (1944) believes the psychopathic sex offender is untreatable and has an inborn nature to take from his environment all that he can without regard for the consequences to either himself or to his victim. Abrahamsen (1950) argues in the same vein, but suggests the psychopath is egocentric; he shows no emotion, is able to ingratiate himself with others but is unable to form an emotional relationship with another person.

The neurotic sex offender is described, from the psycho-analytic perspective, as developmentally arrested (Karpman, 1954). Specifically, neurosis is seen as the underlying condition to all the paraphillias and is the result of not successfully resolving the oedipal crisis by identifying with the same sex parent. Thus the neurotic sex
offender is seen as using the paraphilia to lessen the anxiety caused by the threat of castration by the father or separation from the mother (Kaplan and Sadock, 1991). This explanation of paraphilia is most contentious because the rationales to explain arrested development blamed the mother and/or the victim.

Pedophiles were seen as failing to master the oral stage, most often because of unsatisfied experiences in weaning. Cassity (1927) and Bromberg (1948) held that pedophiles were weaned too abruptly. Conversely, Hadley (1926) argued that pedophiles were weaned over too prolonged a time. This is a classic example of how mothers were blamed for either doing too little or too much and demonstrates the no win situation in which this theoretical perspective placed them.

Mothers were often described in harsh moralistic terms. Waggoner and Boyd (1941) described mothers as selfish, neglectful and sexually promiscuous. No mention was made of fathers. Doshay (1943), another influential researcher, used terms such as feeble minded, vulgar, immoral and poor homemakers to describe mothers. Reich (1938) described the mothers he interviewed as syphilitic, melancholic, suicidal
and as accepting the violence perpetrated against them by their husbands.

The psycho-analytic perspective posited too great an influence with mothers and too little with fathers. The role of mothers was to raise children, the role of fathers was to financially support their families and to be the primary decision makers. Clearly there existed a power differential between men and women which was ignored by the psycho-analytic perspective. The job of raising children belonged to the mother and if children developed problems the mothers were clearly to blame.

During the 1930's and 40's little effort was made to distinguish between the offender and the victim. Consequently, even very young children might be charged with an offense without regard to their role. Karpman (1954) underscores the importance that early genital experience with adults has on establishing a pattern of sex offending behavior which becomes more established over time. Waggoner and Boyd (1941) describe the case of an eleven year old boy whose mother filed a complaint that he was becoming morally depraved. He is described as a male prostitute whose first sexual experience was at nine years of age when he was
sodomized by three older men. Doshay (1943) cites several examples of young boys charged with sex offenses in which they were the victim rather than the aggressor. The first is of a twelve year old boy charged with committing perversions with two older siblings. These older boys had also forced intercourse with their sisters. A second case describes a ten year old boy who was charged when sodomized by a number of adolescents. The literature of this period is also replete with other examples where the victim is blamed. Bender and Blau (1937) argue the fact that many children do not report sexual abuse, even after repeated attacks, demonstrates that the acts are fundamentally satisfying to them. They also maintain that children may not resist, and may even be active in initiating the offense. Bowman (1938) argues that because children are not asexual it follows that they are not necessarily unwilling victims. He then concludes that, in some cases, children are the aggressors, even against adults.

Besides inadequate mothering, the literature review undertaken by Karpman (1954) identifies a number of other childhood experiences common to sex offenders. These include neglect, general delinquency, absent fathers and early onset
of sexual experience, usually with adults. The latter is, of course, a euphemism for sexual abuse and its traumatic impact. Children brought to court for disturbed sexual behavior were characterized as coming from homes that were physically, emotionally, and sexually abusive. The basic human needs of love, security, and acceptance were not met. These children had not integrated appropriate moral standards, nor did they have parents who modeled appropriate behavior. Their behavior was described as disorganized and impulsive.

Freud postulated that trauma may interfere with orderly development, thus, experiences in childhood could result in a personality disorder. It was not until much later that the traumatic impact of child abuse was understood.

The psychoanalytic perspective argues that the mastery of experience involves bringing to the conscious mind those experiences buried in the unconscious. This perspective, rather than suggest we are slaves to experience, argues in favor of a complex interplay between experience and cognition. Freud also emphasized the importance of childhood experiences in forming healthy personalities. He argues that the ability to internalize society's moral code,
and to govern one's impulses is dependent on having one's childhood needs met.

**Erikson's Psycho-social Theory:**

Erikson's (1950) psychosocial theory of development builds on Freud's work by emphasizing the social interactions of children and the cultural influences which impact their development. Erikson's theory described development from infancy into adulthood. His theory, like Freud's, is a stage theory with the assumption that each stage builds on the former. These stages are task oriented and involve the resolution of a crisis to a greater or lesser degree.

A brief description of Erikson's developmental model (1950) shows the importance he placed on childhood experience in developing healthy relationships. A hallmark of Erikson's theory is the dynamic interaction between the child and his environment and between the opposing goals which characterize each stage. This examination will look at the first six stages which span the time between birth and young adulthood.
Trust vs. Mistrust, Erikson's first stage, begins at birth and is resolved by about age two. Children raised in a caring environment where their needs are consistently met not only develop a sense of trust in others but in themselves as well. They learn to influence their environment to have their needs met.

Autonomy versus shame and doubt, Erikson's second stage, corresponds with Freud's anal stage. During this period children learn to hold on and to let go. It is a time when they begin to develop control not only over themselves but over aspects of their environment. The child at this stage is consumed by the need to have choices and to exhibit his increasing ability to control both himself and the world around him. At this time a parent's job is to help the child establish healthy boundaries. According to Erikson, unrealistic expectations of children at this stage can result in the child developing a sense of shame or doubt which hinders the development of impulse control.

Erikson's third stage, initiative versus guilt, corresponds to Freud's phallic stage and is characterized by the child's increased energy to explore and engage the world around him. The child whose initiative is thwarted runs the
risk of developing a sense of guilt about goals contemplated and actions initiated. Children begin the process of internalizing the mores of their culture and to differentiate between what is acceptable and what is not.

The fourth stage of Erikson's model, industry versus inferiority, corresponds to Freud's latency stage. At this point the child enters the world of schooling and is taught to use adult tools. Children ready for the challenges of this stage are able to move forward and learn from those around them, and to gain mastery over an expanded world. Some children, rather than developing a sense of industry, develop a sense of inadequacy, a belief that their efforts are never quite good enough.

Identity versus role confusion, Erikson's fifth stage takes place at puberty and marks the end of childhood. At this stage all the crises of past stages are reworked again; not within the context of family but within the larger and more varied context of peers. This re-questioning is the basis of identity formation and often necessitates a degree of rebellion directed at those responsible for their development to this point. It is a time when past experiences, learned skills and abilities are re-cast to
wrestle with the questions "Who am I?" and "Where do I fit in?" Role confusion can occur on several levels, including sexual identity.

The person who has successfully resolved the crisis of identity formation is now ready to risk those gains by fusing their identity with another. During Erikson's sixth stage, intimacy versus isolation, those sure of their own sense of self are able to make a commitment and enter into an intimate relationship. Those lacking the ability to sustain their identity while giving freely of themselves are likely to seek refuge in isolation.

Erikson, like Freud, developed his model within the theoretical framework of psychoanalysis. This framework and the stage model delineated by Erikson assume children are active participants within their environment. Their experiences influence the degree to which crisis are successfully resolved. Whereas Freud emphasized the force of innate drives which propel children through stages of development, Erikson emphasized social interactions. Erikson's theory shifted the focus from the intra-psychic to the inter-psychic. Children's experiences were cast within a broader environmental context.
Erikson’s psycho-social theory of development has been criticized to the extent that it purports to describe the development of male and female children rather than male children. Gilligan (1982) argues that male and female development is quite different and that Erikson’s model does not accurately depict female development. She makes the point that aside from the first stage, Trust vs. Mistrust, and his sixth stage, Intimacy vs. Isolation his other stages speak to a development characterized by increasing individuation. She argues that female children develop self in relationship and is characterized by cooperation rather than competition. This thesis is concerned with the development of sex offending behavior in males and consequently with their development. Gilligan’s work in delineating a different developmental scheme or female development is interesting considering what male developmental experience lacks. Does the fact that boys are encouraged to develop self in competition with others while girls are encouraged to develop self in cooperation influence the much greater tendency in males to commit sex offenses?
Object Relations Theory:

The importance of childhood experience is also theorized in other psycho-analytic perspectives. Kohut (1977), believes that the failure of the child to introject a loving parent self object results in lessened ability to develop a healthy sense of self. The underdeveloped self in attempting to hold together, seeks opportunities to feel loved and accepted. Essentially, he suggests that lack of empathetic parenting in early childhood can result in a lessened ability to negotiate successfully in the adult world, and to form meaningful and mutually fulfilling relationships with peers. Unlike Freud, who saw aggression and sex as primary drives which the ego and super-ego regulated, Kohut (1977) saw sex and aggression as secondary phenomenon when the needs of the self were not met. In his work with sex offenders Anechiarico (1990) argues that this perspective better reflects the motivations of sex offenders than Freud's psycho-sexual theory. He directs the intervention to repairing the self-esteem of offenders.

Chodorow (1978) distinguishes male and female experience from the object relations perspective. She theorizes that female children experience themselves as like
their mothers and that identity formation and attachment become fused. Male children experience their identity as opposite from their mothers and therefore the masculine identity becomes fused with separation. This leads females to seek attachments and males to seek separateness and accounts, in Chodorow's opinion, for the tendency in males to fear intimacy. Consequently males are more likely than females to have difficulty in sustaining relationships.

Robb-Avery and Ryan (1988) exploring the link between parental nurturance, self-esteem, and popularity with peers, examined ninety-two randomly selected boys and girls between the ages of nine and twelve. Children with higher scores on parental nurturance, as determined by BORS, perceived themselves as more socially and cognitively competent than children with low scores. High scorers also reported more self worth and more popularity with peers.

Low social skills have been identified in a number of studies of sex offenders. Overholser and Beck (1986) compared molesters and rapists with a control group. They reported that hetero-social skills were deficient in both offender groups as compared to controls. In role plays with a female confederate that demanded an assertive response,
rapists evidenced greater anxiety while molesters displayed fears of negative evaluations and stereotyped views of sex roles. Overholser and Beck (1986) quoted one molester as saying:

With an adult female falling in love was threatening. I could be judged by someone who knew enough to judge and I didn't want them to see I was weird, insecure, fearful, a loser. Young girls don't know any better.

(p.686)

Bethea-Jackson and Brisset-Chapman (1989), in reporting on their work with adolescent sex-offenders, note social isolation, low self esteem, emotionally absent fathers and felt lack of personal power and control as common characteristics in their clients.

Cognitive Developmental Theory:

A major assumption of cognitive developmental psychology is that children actively interact with their environment in an effort to organize and make sense of their world (Piaget, 1952). From this perspective, children's thinking develops from their efforts to integrate experience (Ault, 1983). A Child's ability to make sense of their word will depend on their cognitive ability and stage of
development. Children judge the world and their place in it by the experiences they have.

This perspective also differentiates child/adult from child/child experience, the latter being more likely to be reciprocal in nature. Dean and Malik (1986), in a study of maltreated children argue that parental maltreatment will alter a child's perception of relationships with both peers and parents. In projective tests, maltreated children, unlike controls, failed to include descriptions of cooperation, compromise, sympathizing, understanding or exchanges between parent and child that would reflect a sense of equality. Although this study examined children who were physically and sexually abused or neglected, no significant differences were noted between types of maltreatment. Developmental delays were also noted in the maltreated children regarding interpersonal connectedness with peers.

Gomes-Schwartz (1985), in a study of eighteen adolescent offenders referred for treatment, noted that a majority were cognitively delayed, as measured in IQ and motor visualization tests. As well, most were at least one year behind in school. As a group they tested high in anti-
social or social delinquency. Ego-development, as measured on the Loevinger Ego-development Scale which measures the degree to which children have moved toward impulse control, showed that only three of the fifteen boys tested had attained age appropriate scores. It was argued that these offenders had failed to internalize controls necessary to delay gratification. This study highlights the interconnectedness between cognitive and personality development.

Children's attempts to make sense of abusive parenting style, and the ensuing cognitive distortions which result are described in Amsterdam (1979). These authors interviewed 113 adolescents recruited from the California Youth Authority. They report that most of these children resort to the defense mechanisms of rationalization and denial. They described their own punishment by parents as a sign of caring; they described trying to obey their parents by becoming good children, and made excuses for their parents while blaming themselves for their abuse. Males in this study tended to act out by becoming aggressive toward others, while girls tended to withdraw.
Parental reaction to a child's sexual experience has also been noted as influencing the child's development. Parents who react harshly and punitively to normal sex play may add an emotional component making it difficult for the child to organize the experience in a healthy way. Sarrel and Sarrel (1984) recount a number of case histories of sexually dysfunctional clients whose problems have their beginning in this type of faulty perception in childhood.

In the following section, theoretical perspectives will be discussed which attempt to explain the sex offender. The research findings which follow contain elements which link them to the proposition that childhood experiences have a bearing on adult functioning.

**Individual Perspectives:**

A psychoanalytic perspective, with its emphasis on the individual, argues that differences exist between those who commit sex crimes and those who do not. Further, this perspective suggests that those who rape same age peers differ from those who molest children. This perspective is concerned with constructing typologies and explanations which account for the array of differences which have been noted. This perspective offers an explanatory model based
on the notion that sex offenders have experienced a childhood trauma which has gone unresolved.

The once common idea that those who commit sexual offenses were sexually abused as children is an example of the kind of explanations that this theoretical perspective gives rise to. Research from this perspective, in concentrating on the differences between offenders and non-offenders, suggests that offenders have had differing experiences. This section will examine two models which support the notion that individual experiences have an impact on the development of an offending pattern of behavior. The two models examined are the trauma model and the learning model.

**Trauma Model:**

Freud originated the notion that childhood trauma can interfere with the development of a healthy personality. However, feminists like Herman (1992), Terr (1990) and Gil (1991) were instrumental in broadening the trauma model to include the sexual abuse of children, and in developing the notion that children abused sexually or physically are likely to experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The trauma model has been forwarded as an explanatory model to
describe some sex offenders, by drawing attention to the intergenerational link between victimization as a child and becoming the offender later in life.

In his work with adolescent sex offenders, Breer (1987) suggests that in abusing others the offender is re-enacting his own abuse, but as the aggressor rather than the victim. By controlling and re-shaping the experience, the offender/victim attempts to master the original traumatic experience; the abused becomes the abuser. This model is consistent with findings that many offenders were once victims (Mayer, 1988; Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, and Kaplan, 1986; Cavanagh-Johnson, 1988; Ryan, Lane, Davis and Isaac, 1987). This hypothesis is also congruent with the finding that, for many children, sexual abuse results in premature sexualization (Finklehor, 1986); hence, the sexual component to the re-enactment.

Because of the premature sexualization, sexually abused children are likely to act out their abuse in sexually inappropriate ways. Kolko and Moser (1988) compared physically and sexually abused children with non-abused children in a hospital setting, and found that sexually abused children evidenced greater sexual acting out behavior
than children in the other two groups. The sexual acting out behavior common to sexually abused children was interpreted by early researchers, working from a psychoanalytic framework, as seductiveness, and hence the labels examined earlier. Even today this sexualized traumatic reaction has been mislabeled as the child being purposively seductive rather than as a component of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Bass and Davis (1988) suggest that to be sexually abused as a child is to have one's natural sexual capacity stolen. Sexual abuse comes in response to the abuser's timetable and addresses their needs rather than respecting the needs and developmental preparedness of the child. These authors suggest that when sexual abuse is linked with affection, later in life the abused person may use sex to meet non-sexual needs, like the need for closeness and nurturing. One of the ways sexual abuse interferes with development, according to these authors, is that the child's expression of sexuality is maladaptive and those patterns may persist into adulthood.

Langevin, Wright and Handy (1989) compared 201 sex offenders who reported having experienced childhood sexual
abuse with 261 sex offenders who reported not being sexually abused. Those offenders who had been sexually abused as children showed greater sexualized childhood as evidenced by the numbers and variety of sexual contacts with adults, peers and siblings of both genders. As a group they had committed rape more often, showed more emotional disturbance and had more disturbed father/son relationships. As well they reported more parent/child aggression and more parental alcohol abuse.

It may not only be the abuse that results in trauma. The meaning derived by the child from the experience can also contribute to the trauma. Elwell and Ephross (1987) studied twenty children who had been sexually abused and noted conditions which contributed to the child's sense of trauma. Children who received environmental cues during the abuse and / or when the abuse was disclosed which supported the notion the abuse was serious and constituted a crisis, had a heightened sense of trauma. Post abuse cues that contributed to a negative definition and increased trauma were the number of people seen by the child and whether the child needed to testify against the perpetrator.
Haugaard and Tilly (1988) in a retrospective study, explored the link between sexual experience and negative affect at the time of the experience and in the present. Their findings point out the importance of the sense of control we experience and how cultural norms might influence the derived meaning of an experience. In their study questionnaires were sent to 1784 male and female college students asking about their own childhood sexual experiences. Of the 1089 responses, 42% reported having had a sexual encounter with another child before age 13. Respondents were asked to recall how they felt about the encounter at the time of occurrence and presently. Negative affect, both in the present and in the past, correlated with whether or not the experience was homosexual in nature and with the level of coercion the respondents felt, but not with the act per se. Acts reported ranged from kissing and hugging to genital intercourse. An important implication from this study is that relatively benign experiences, i.e. kissing and hugging, may have negative effects depending on the circumstances which accompany behavior and which impact the meaning ascribed to the behavior. Experiences which
might not meet the criterion of sexual abuse may interfere with healthy psychological development.

The Trauma Model has some shortcomings. It fails to explain why males, who account for the vast majority of offenders, are the least likely to be the victims of sexual abuse (Badgley, 1984; Russell, 1983; Herman, 1990). The inference is that many offenders were never sexually abused. A second but related weakness of the Trauma Model is that it fails to explain what Finkelhor (1986) terms the male monopoly. Why do females, who account for the vast majority of victims, rarely become abusers?

Researchers, in addressing the first point, have suggested that more boys are sexually abused than are reported in the literature. Monaco and Gaier (1987) speculate that the differential socialization of boys and girls may inhibit boys from disclosing past sexual abuse. Since boys are socialized to handle and take control of their environment, being a victim is dissonant with their assumed self reliance. They speculate that because most sex offenders are male, boys victimized by men may fear being labeled as homosexual if they report. They also point out that males are more likely to be sexually abused in groups
which might lead them to conceptualize the abuse as a game or as somehow more acceptable.

In addressing the perception of a male monopoly, research indicates that men and women experience sexual abuse differently. In order to master the trauma of being sexually abused, men have a tendency to externalize their pain and strike out against others. Conversely, women tend to internalize the experience and act in ways that put themselves at risk. In testing this notion, Marten (1985) looked at gender differences in twenty incest victims, ten male and ten female victims in five different age groupings. She concluded that females tend to experience incest as a violation of self and of their relational network. Males experience incest as a violation of self and their stable power structure, thus their emotional damage is to their sense of potency and reinforces their fear of intimacy.

Friedrich and Luecke (1988), in a study of 85 children, 24 male and 61 female, from three to twelve years of age, also found that boys tended to externalize while girls internalized. Multiple regression analysis showed that externalizing behavior was related to duration of abuse, closeness of relationship to the perpetrator and inversely
to the time elapsed since disclosure. Internalization was related to the severity of abuse, closeness of the perpetrator and frequency of abuse.

Besides the tendency of boys to act out their abuse aggressively (externalize), it seems their behavior becomes more pronounced over time. It would appear that rather than master the abuse experience their behavior becomes more entrenched through repeated re-enactment. In play therapy with traumatized children Gil (1991) argues that post traumatic play, in the short term, can empower the child to rework the experience; but if allowed to continue without alteration it may become entrenched. Rather than a sense of mastery re-enactment of the abuse experience may heighten trauma.

Bruckner and Johnson (1987) report that in a treatment group for male survivors of sexual abuse, all the members, admitted to being physically and sexually aggressive with their partners. The men in the group seemed to subscribe to the traditional expectation that they should have protected themselves and questioned their masculinity and independence because they had failed to do so. Their subsequent aggressive acting out was interpreted as an attempt to
regain their lost power reflecting the cyclical nature of re-enactment; these men seemed not to have gained mastery over their abuse experience, but rather, developed an entrenched pattern of behavior.

The trauma model also fails to explain why males who are victims of sexual abuse do not become perpetrators. Timely intervention plays a part in ameliorating the harmful effects of sexual abuse, but it cannot be the whole explanation. Prior to the 1970's sexual abuse was not acknowledged as a wide spread problem in need of a systemic attempt to identify and offer treatment to victims. Male survivors of sexual abuse, who do not offend, are only lately seeking treatment. Little is known about factors that ameliorate the effects of childhood abuse for male survivors. This underscores the importance of developing explanatory models sophisticated enough to account for the complex array of factors which can distinguish between the development of an offending and non offending behavior.

In summary, the Trauma Model as an explanation for sexual offending suggests that the offender's pattern of behavior has its roots in childhood trauma. In an effort to regain their lost power boys aggress against others; this
aggression may have a sexual component. Post traumatic play if left unchecked, may heighten the trauma and become entrenched. From a developmental perspective, this pattern of behavior would also become more sophisticated. The process of enactment and entrenchment will be developed further in the next section.

**Learning Model:**

A second theoretical perspective which, like the psychoanalytic perspective, focuses attention on the individual's experience is the learning model. This perspective argues sexual behavior is learned, practiced and perfected over time.

Bandura (1965) showed that children learn a pattern of behavior, without the benefit of reinforcement, by observing a social model. Having observed a social model, children acquire a symbolic representation in the form of images and verbal labels which are called upon to guide their attempts to imitate the modeled behavior. Bandura (1977), in a series of experiments, found rewards sharply increase the likelihood that the behavior will be modeled, but that behavior will be modeled even in the face of punishment. Many of the treatment regimes established for sex offenders
make use of the learning perspective. The aim is to link the reward (orgasm) to a non-deviant mental representation (fantasy) and away from the deviant sexual fantasy often reported by sex offenders (Schwartz and Cellini, 1988).

Laws and Marshall (1990) describe a conditioning theory of the etiology and maintenance of deviant sexual behavior which draws on Bandura's early work. According to these authors deviant sexual behavior is learned in much the same way as nondeviant behavior, and that sexual behavior as a type of social behavior is modeled in a variety of ways within the social environment. Rather than look at the traumatic impact of sexual abuse as a cause for the intergenerational repetition of sex offending behavior, these authors suggest that, by being abused, the victim learns a set of behaviors which act as guides in the development of their own sexuality.

Laws and Marshall, argue that witnessing another's abuse, viewing pornographic material and the more subtle misogynist messages which exist at a cultural level may start a process of development, but that once started the child can self monitor and refine his behavior. Post Traumatic Play (Gill, 1991; Terr, 1990) if left unchecked
becomes entrenched through repetition. Laws and Marshall stress that the etiology of sex offending behavior are also to be found in experiences that do not induce trauma but which provide the child with behavioral guidelines.

The importance of the early childhood experiences of sex offenders are not necessarily limited to those experiences of an overt sexual nature. Marshall and Barbaree (1990) contend that the early developmental experiences of sex offenders fail to prepare them for the changes that occur in puberty. These experiences make it more likely that, as adolescents, sex and aggression become fused. They cite that exposure to a violent parenting style can lead to a lack of confidence, and to feelings of resentment and hostility. These feelings, in turn hinder the adolescent in his ability to form mutually satisfying and respectful relationships. These authors believe the difficulties encountered by children from abusive homes are exacerbated by the lack of modeling of what constitutes a loving relationship as they observe their fathers aggress against their mothers.

Evidence that sex offenders learn from and model behaviors they witness can be found in a number of studies.
These studies also underscore the point that many sex offenders have not been sexually abused.

In a study of 25 sibling incest families, Smith and Israel (1987) reported that although 52% of the perpetrators had been sexually abused, other dynamics were identified as being important. In 76% of the families at least one parent was having an extra-marital affair. Of the children, 46% had witnessed sexually provocative behavior on the part of their parents including sex talked about openly and in obscene ways, exposure to pornography and other sexually explicit material. Some parents made little effort to discourage their children from observing marital and extra-marital sexual activity. Finally, 72% of the parents had been sexually abused as children.

Becker, Kaplan, Kavoussi and Cunningham-Rathner (1986), in a study of twenty-two adolescent incest perpetrators, found only 23% reported they had been sexually abused. Based on his clinical work with adolescent sex offenders, Breer (1987) reports that 60% of the young men he works with in therapy report being the victims of sexual abuse. Whether looking at adult perpetrators or child perpetrators, other studies tend to report victimization rates within this
range. A study of 154 cases of child sexual abuse by Faller (1989) reported that 1/3 of the offenders and 1/2 of the non-offending mothers had been exposed to sexual abuse as children. Cavanagh-Johnson (1988) reported on 47 boys between the ages of 4-13 who were in treatment because they had committed a sexual assault on a younger child. Forty-nine percent of these boys were found to have been sexually abused. Prior sexual abuse is found to a varying degree in the backgrounds of both child and adult sex offenders, but is not a necessary or sufficient explanation for sexually abusive behavior.

While the Trauma Model fails to explain why so many perpetrators seem never to have been sexually abused, when combined with a social observational model we can begin to see the possibility for other developmental pathways, including the witnessing of abuse, the experiencing of emotional neglect and physical abuse. The misogynist cues may be quite subtle, as in the case of some television advertising, but the message may be quite powerful.

The learning model suggests that children are actively observing and ascribing meaning to what happens around them, and are likely to repeat what is modeled in that
environment. Children need not be sexually abused to become sex offenders. The work by Marshall and Barbaree (1990); and Laws and Marshall (1990) suggests attention should be paid to the attitudes as well as the behaviors modeled to children.

**Family Systems Theory:**

Those researchers and practitioners who advance a family systems perspective note the dysfunctional nature of roles, boundaries and subsystems in families where sex crimes are perpetrated, usually by a parent on a child but also one sibling against another. A family systems perspective, with its attention on process, and which concentrates on patterns and their maintenance, chooses not to see these patterns as linear cause and effect. This perspective does not generate explanatory hypotheses about what causes the dysfunctional patterns associated with sexual abuse to arise in the first place.

The family systems perspective does note, however, the multigenerational aspect of sexual abuse. Implied in this approach is the assumption that families where sexual abuse takes place differ from families where sexual abuse does not take place. From a systems perspective, therapists argue
that families share a number of characteristics. As a system a family can be described as a network of interactive processes. These interactions take place both between individuals within the family and between the family and systems outside the family. Relative to this perspective, sexual abuse is often described as a symptom of a dysfunctional pattern (Will, 1983).

The concepts most often cited as important in the development and maintenance of sexual abuse are roles, boundaries and sub-systems (Bentovim, 1988). Roles are conceptualized as the behavioral patterns that define what family members do to promote family stability, and to achieve individual and system goals. Boundaries describe the rules which govern the internal and external interactions of families. Sub-systems describe the alliances which form within the family system, some of which are role mandated. The primary subsystems common to families are the marital, parental, and sibling subsystems (Becvar and Becvar, 1988).

While not ruling out the occurrence of a one time only event, a systems perspective emphasizes process and the dynamic quality of development. Because of this dynamic
interaction between roles, boundaries and subsystems they are rarely treated as discreet units independent one from the other. Not surprisingly, researchers using this framework have focused primarily on gathering information on incest; Most of the work reviewed in this section has that bias.

Most writers have noted that the incest victim, by the very nature of the sexual assault, has been cast into an inappropriate role. Prior to the sexual abuse victims of incest are often cast by the offender into roles inappropriate for their age.

Kosof (1985) notes that the offender sets the target child up by paying special attention to her, and developing a special relationship that over time becomes more and more sexualized. She notes that as the offender's relationship to the victim becomes more central, the non-offending parent's position in the family becomes more peripheral. The offender grooms the child to take on a role clearly inappropriate to their developmental stage.

Hunter (1990) likens the relationship between the parent offender and the child victim to a marriage, and notes the permutations on the other sub-systems. He argues
that the child loses his or her position in the sibling sub-system because the child is often treated differently by the offending parent. In treating the child more as a peer than as a child the offending parent blurs the parent/child boundaries. Figuratively, the child loses her father who becomes her lover, as well as her mother who becomes her rival.

Freidrich (1990) notes that loss and desertion themes figure prominently in the lives of both offending and non-offending parents where incest has been the presenting problem. The long term effects, he argues, is to impede their ability to form and maintain secure attachments both within the marital sub-system and between the parental and sibling subsystems.

Bank and Kahn (1982) note that the motivation for some sibling incest is nurture-oriented and may contain elements of mutual consent, pleasure, loyalty, love and compassion. These authors argue that children most likely to be involved in this type of incest are neglected or abandoned children from dysfunctional families. Cavanagh-Johnson (1993), in her work with sexually intrusive children has noted that some children no longer look to adults for emotional
nurturance and instead turn to biological, step or foster siblings for their emotional bonding. These children use sex to establish and maintain emotional connections, and have confused sex with caring and closeness.

Smith and Israel (1987) studied twenty-five families where sibling incest had been substantiated. They identified the following dynamics as common to all the families studied:

1. Distant inaccessible parents, including parents who were physically distant (most often because of career choice) and parents who were psychologically inaccessible to their children. Parental leadership or role modeling was described as ill-defined or non-existent.

2. Parental stimulation of sexual climate in the home:
   48% of the perpetrators had observed sexual activity between their parents or between a parent and another person.
   52% of the perpetrators had been sexually abused by another family member or a third party.
   32% of the fathers had initially abused their daughters, who were subsequently abused by their brothers.
   40% of mothers engaged in behaviors which blurred generational lines. They were openly flirtatious with their
sons, and overly involved with their physical development and sexual maturation. They enlisted their children as confidants regarding their own sexual exploits and exhibited a prurient interest in their children's sexual relations with peers. Conversely, 32% of the mothers discouraged sexual inquiries or sexual expressions of all kinds.

3. Family Secrets: 72% of mothers and fathers in the study were sexual abuse survivors. 76% of the parents were involved in extra-marital affairs. The authors hypothesized that as the children saw their parents moving away from each other they drew closer in an effort to hold a disintegrating family together. The boundaries in these families were described as loose and inconsequential.

Daie, Witztum, and Eleff, (1989) presents four case studies of sibling incest. They contend that incest is best understood as a prolonged process within the context of disturbed family relations, which included the following characteristics:

1. The father was absent or abusive.
2. When boys were the perpetrators, mothers were dominant and used the son as a substitute for the absent father. Sons were exposed to double binds; for example, sex was seen by
mothers as dirty or taboo on the one hand while on the other mothers engaged in seductive behavior or tolerated similar behavior in their children.

3. A lack of open communication between family members and or between family members and others outside the family.

4. Identity diffusion.

4. Blurred intergenerational boundaries.

Authier (1983) suggests a number of tasks in working with families where sexual abuse has occurred, which reflect the family systems perspective. These include individuation, definition of generational boundaries, softening boundaries between the family and community. She believes that family rules regarding affection, touching and sexuality need to be examined and redefined, as do role expectations. She also recommends strengthening the mother/daughter dyad before involving the father in family therapy. Some issues she believes need to be addressed at this point are: daughters anger at mother for not protecting her, the competitive mother daughter relationship, mother daughter role reversal, and the mutual feelings of betrayal and guilt.

Sefarbi (1990) studied ten adolescent sex offenders and their families, 5 who admitted their crime and 5 who denied
sexually abusing another. She found that admitters were in disorganized families while deniers were in enmeshed families. Parental nurturance was positively correlated with self-esteem. The self-esteem ratings for those who denied committing sexual abuse were significantly higher than for those who admitted. Admitters were characterized as disconnected, pseudomature and inappropriately autonomous. Abandonment by fathers was a recurrent theme in this group. Deniers came from homes where the mother was overwhelmed and often drew physical and emotional support from her children. Boundaries were described as diffuse and roles within the family were not adequately differentiated.

Kaplan, Becker and Cunningham-Rathner (1988) interviewed 27 parents of adolescent sex offenders and found that parents under-reported physical and sexual abuse of their sons, had a high incidence of being abused themselves, and evidenced a high level of denial regarding their sons sexual assaults.

Stevenson, Castillo and Sefarbi (1990) have focused on denial as a treatment dynamic. They argue that helping families to confront their son's sex offending while remaining supportive of their son's treatment ultimately
benefits the family and the offender. They involve the family as a change agent in the treatment process.

Pierce (1987), in a review of the literature on father-son incest, concludes that fathers who commit incest often grew up in homes, where parent/child boundaries, particularly within the context of sexuality, were loose. She concluded that these fathers were unable to set limits for themselves or their children, and as a result the children were often confused about family roles.

Cole and Woolger (1989) studied the child rearing attitudes of incest and non-incest sexual abuse survivors. When compared to non-incest survivors, incest survivors saw their fathers as more negatively controlling, less accepting and as stricter disciplinarians. Their mothers were seen as less involved and more negatively controlling. Incest victims scored higher on the child indulgence-autonomy scale and lower on the child acceptance scale than non-incest victims. It was felt that, lacking positive parental role models, these mothers lacked appropriate strategies for being responsive to their own children's' needs.

Pierce and Pierce (1987), in a retrospective study using child welfare records of adolescent sex offenders,
found that 63% had been physically abused and 43% had been sexually abused by a family member. Five percent had been sexually abused by someone outside the family and, a further 11% had been exposed to inappropriate sexual behavior. Seventy percent of the offenders had been neglected. Overall only 8% of the adolescents in this study had not been abused in some way, with the majority of abuse taking place within the context of their family of origin.

Hoagwood (1990) conducted a study comparing parents' perceptions of family functioning where a child had been sexually abused by a third party with families where no sexual abuse had taken place. She found that mothers' perceptions were congruent with those of their children but that fathers were not. Specifically, mothers of abused children reported problems in the areas of problem solving, communication, and general functioning, whereas fathers did not report problems in these areas. By comparison, parents of non abused children shared similar perceptions of how their family was structured and how it functioned. It would appear that in families where children were sexually abused fathers' perceptions of how well the family was functioning did not coincide with the mothers and children perceptions.
Whether this incongruency existed prior to the abuse and was a contributing factor or whether it developed after the abuse as a form of denial that the family was experiencing a problem was not made clear. The implication is strong, however, that in families where children are sexually abused fathers are more likely than mothers to be out of touch with the extent of the problem the family is facing.

In a companion study Hoagwood and Stewart (1989), using the McMaster Family Assessment Device, compared 30 sexually abused children with 46 children who had not been sexually abused. Three areas found to discriminate the two groups were problem solving, roles and general functioning.

Alexander (1985) constructed a model which describes the dynamics of incestuous families. She suggests that isolation, poor conflict resolution skills and poor communications avenues are important factors in the development and maintenance of incest. According to her model members of incestuous families are isolated from each other, and as a system from the larger community. This isolation, besides serving to keep the abuse a secret, also inhibits family members from experiencing more appropriate socialization processes.
Noting that incestuous families are often described as enmeshed or conversely disorganized, Alexander (1985) suggests that the paradoxical needs common to families – individuation and integration – have gone awry. If integration has come to dominate, then the family is seen as enmeshed. Conversely, if individuation is too strong the family is described as disorganized. Both of these descriptions are seen as representing opposing ends of the same continuum. She argues as well, that an ability to communicate and resolve conflicts effectively promotes growth by allowing the family and its individuals to identify and meet mutually beneficial goals. This implies a degree of reciprocal respect and cooperation which is lacking in incestuous families where a father typically exploits a child for his sexual gratification. An incestuous father would use whatever power he has to keep the system isolated and the other family members powerless. His goal of gaining sexual gratification from his children is inimicable to the needs of his children to develop their own sense of self.

From the family systems perspective, roles, boundaries and sub-systems are seen as functioning in maladaptive ways
that allow incestuous patterns to develop and be maintained. Traditionally this perspective has emphasized process and has not concerned itself with isolating causal effects. This has resulted in criticism, especially from feminists, who argue that by not establishing responsibility for the sexual abuse, family systems therapists and researchers were parceling out responsibility for the abuse to other members of the family, most notably the victims and the non-offending parent, Carter and Papp, (1986).

Furniss (1984), while recognizing that the father is solely responsible for the sexual act, encourages both parents to reach agreement on the degree of their involvement as equals. Lutz and Medway (1984) stress the reciprocity dynamic in family systems. They argue the importance of establishing relationships of understanding between the victim and the victimizer. The victimizer has the opportunity to become more trustworthy while the victim has the opportunity of repaying the victimizer for whatever loyalty obligations she has to him.

If the non-offending parent is asked to share responsibility for the abuse, it should come as no surprise that mothers are often included in the apology session.
Trepper (1986) describes as crucial to the success of the apology session that the apology be genuine and that the children get the clear message that the sexual abuse is the responsibility of both parents.

By ignoring the differential effects of power in the family, the systems approach seems to suggest that all members share at least some responsibility for the dysfunction. This aspect of the systems perspective shares with the psychoanalytic perspective a bias which encourages the child and mother to share responsibility for the abuse with the father. The validity of this criticism is acknowledged by some family therapists working with sex offenders.

Friedrich (1990) in a discussion of the client centered versus the family systems approach notes, that in the past family therapists have failed to take into account the power differentials which exist in families between men and women and between adults and children.

Other family therapists argue that until the offender has reached the point where he can accept complete responsibility for the abuse it is irresponsible of the
therapist to put the victim in proximity with the offender (Jenkins, 1990).

Family systems theory does not concern itself with the factors which cause sexual abuse, but rather with the family dynamics which maintain the abuse. In this regard family systems theory suggests that roles, boundaries, and subsystems become dysfunctional. It is not hard to argue that, a father who molests his daughter has violated a serious boundary by removing her from the sibling subsystem where she deserves to be, and placing her in the inappropriate role of sexual partner. It is hard to argue, given what is known about coercive manipulation practiced by sex offenders, that non-offending members of the family share responsibility for maintaining those dysfunctional roles, boundaries, and subsystems.

**Feminist Theory:**

This perspective focuses on the structural inequities that exist at a cultural level which lead males to assume a right to dominate females. It points out that boys and girls, while being socialized to fulfill roles dictated by a male culture, are also socialized to expect different treatment from each other. Boys are expected and learn to
dominate and initiate while girls are expected and learn to nurture and be compliant (Szirom, 1988).

Feminists were instrumental in exposing the extent to which women and children are sexually abused, (Butler 1983; Butler, 1985). Their analysis of this problem is consistent with a perspective that emphasizes the significant role culture plays in sexual assaults. Three themes relevant to sex offenders developed in feminist literature which will be discussed in this section are the structural gender inequity inherent in a patriarchal society, socialization and the sexual objectification of women and children.

Feminist analysis suggests that gender inequity is a structural problem that arises from a patriarchal system which overvalues men and undervalues women. These structural inequities, centered as they are on gender, have meant that men have dominated women economically, physically and sexually. Feminist philosophers like Dworkin (1978) argue that gender inequality is so pervasive and so ingrained that it represents misogyny on a societal scale regardless of the attitudes that individual men, or for that matter women, profess to hold.
Feminist theories of sexual assault, focusing primarily at the cultural level, emphasize the power differentials which exist between men and women (Brownmiller, 1975). Sexual abuse, from this perspective, is seen as an inevitable, albeit extreme expression of a patriarchal society which is structured in such a way that women and children are dominated by men (Ward, 1984). Feminist theory with its focus on gender differences emphasizes the similarities between male experiences and how they differ from those of women. Herman (1981) suggests that the unanswered question posed by feminists is not why some men engage in sexual assault but why most men do not.

Butler (1985) also addresses the issue of power and the importance it has for men within a patriarchal society. However, the picture she paints of the men who commit incest suggests that it is their lack of power in the outside world, coupled with a lack of warmth and nurturing, that predisposes them to abuse their children.

Dominelli (1989) maintains that the power differentials existing between men and women and between adults and children within families are inevitable given the paternalistic and hierarchical nature of western society.
She argues that given this imbalance of power incest is a betrayal of trust because the more powerful male members of the family abuse rather than protect the less powerful women and children. Dominelli goes on to describe incest as a sexualized power relationship which enhances male power through his sexual gratification at the expense of the child's concept of self. The essential dynamic of incest then is the imposition of men's power, which is institutionalized in the patriarchal system, over women and children. As well, Dominelli points out that privacy traditionally afforded to family makes it very difficult for women and children to seek help, or for the helping professions to intervene unless an artificially high standard of proof is met. The concept of "a man's home is his castle" adds to the father's power and enables him to keep the family isolated so the abuse can continue.

A second theme developed from this perspective to explain sexual abuse is the differential socialization experience (Szirom, 1988). Beginning at birth and continuing throughout one's life, socialization is seen as the vehicle by which patriarchal social mores, including sex role stereotypes and rape myths, are perpetuated. Analysis
centers on the differential effects of socialization and the outcomes of that process. Accordingly, male children are socialized to assume power and control over others, and to take the initiative in meeting their economic, social and sexual needs, (Crites and Fitzgerald 1978). In contrast, female children are conditioned to take a more passive, less assertive role. Female children are generally socialized to nurture and otherwise meet the needs of men, (Pandy and Griffitt 1975). The work by Finkelhor and Browne, (1986) also support the argument that differential socialization contribute to the development of sex offending behavior. They identify several effects of socialization which they argue have a bearing on why men have a propensity to sexual assault and women do not. They suggest that women learn earlier and more completely to distinguish between sexual and non-sexual forms of affection. Heterosexual success is a more important component in men's gender identity than in women's. Men are socialized to focus their sexual interests around sexual acts separate from the context of a relationship. Finally, men are socialized to see their appropriate sexual partner as someone smaller and younger than themselves, while the opposite is true for women.
Block (1983), in exploring the issue of socialization, has described several ways in which parental expectations differ for male and female children. She notes that compared to female children, male children are under more pressure to achieve and compete, show more control over affect, show more independence and personal responsibility. Finally, boys experience more authoritarianism and less acceptance of behaviors which deviate from the gender stereotype. Expanding on the theme of differential socialization, Bolton, Morris and MacEachron (1989) argue that normal sexual development places male children at risk in ways which do not meet the legal and clinical definitions of abuse. They describe a continuum of family environments from ideal non-abusive to overtly sexually abusive. They theorize that male children experience abuse of sexuality which, because it does not meet the legal or clinical criteria of sexual abuse, goes unreported but nevertheless may adversely affect a child's sexual development, leading some children to behave in sexually deviant ways.

If the problem is male dominance and its loci is in the very fabric of society, then it follows that the solution lies in a massive reordering of society. Ward, (1984)
suggests the dismantling of the patriarchal nuclear family and the reformulation of the family as a long term goal. Sparks and Bat-Ami (1991), in a paper on the subject of rape prevention, argue that social norms which anticipate sexual assault lend sexual assault a degree of legitimacy by assigning responsibility to the victim. They argue that social norms which lessen a woman's right to control her own body must be replaced by norms congruent with the principle of 'respect for person'. Others suggest we must challenge, with the view of changing, ingrained attitudes which support rape myths and which have been found to be held by a significant number of men (Malamuth, 1981). Check and Malamuth, (1983) studies on the relationship between sex role stereotypes and reactions to depiction's of stranger and acquaintance rape also support the feminist perspective. Results show that holding stereotypical sex role attitudes which restrict women relative to men play an important mediating role in sexual violence. Respondents whose attitudes were congruent with sex role stereotypes reported significantly more arousal to depiction's of acquaintance rape, reported a greater likelihood of committing rape themselves and were more likely than respondents whose
attitudes were rated incongruent with traditional sex roles to accept a number of rape myths. Finally, subjects who endorsed traditional sex role stereotypes were less likely to perceive acquaintance rape as "real rape", attributed greater responsibility to the victim and perceived the victim as reacting more favorably than subjects who were rated low on the sex role attitude scales.

The final theme discussed is the sexual objectification of women and children. Women and children have historically been considered man's chattel; as the property of men, women and children's human rights are extended to them by 'their' man. When considered as property, rather than as human beings with the same rights as men, women and children are dehumanized. In the case of sex offenders, women and children are seen as objects to be used for man's sexual pleasure, (Rush 1980).

Dworkin (1978) outlines two models which describe how women are socially controlled and sexually used. The first metaphor, which she calls the brothel model sees women functioning for the sexual pleasure of men. Women in this model exist as a collection of body parts for men to use for their pleasure. The second metaphor Dworkin terms the
farming model. Functionally women are reproductive units and are valued for the 'fruit' they bear rather than for the person they are. A central point in Dworkin's analysis is that women are used by men, and that their value in a patriarchal society centers on the sexual pleasure men derive from them and or their reproductive capacity. In short, women exist as sexual objects which are controlled and used by men.

In an article on incest, Sommers-Flanagan and Walters (1987) argue that the relative importance placed on individualism and control, coupled with the power differential which exists between men and women and adults and children, has lead the former to objectify the latter. They point out the tendency of men to see women, and sometimes children, as sexual objects under their power and control. This dehumanizes the victim of incest and makes it easier for the assault to take place. In the perpetrator's mind no harm of any consequence is taking place. To bolster this argument these authors draw attention to the lack of empathy which offenders display, and suggest that men generally are not socialized to show an empathic concern for others. In the case of sex offenders they argue that the
offenders' lack of empathy allows them to meet their individual needs at the expense of the safety and welfare of their children.

Armstrong (1987) describes another way in which children become sexual objects. Having been abused, and having that knowledge become public, children are likely to become sexual targets and be further abused by other males, both inside and outside the family.

In drawing our attention to the cultural level of analysis, the feminist perspective is supported by cross cultural studies. Sanday (1981) has isolated several characteristics of male dominated society which correlate to high rape prevalence, including societies where only a male deity is worshipped, where warfare is glorified, where women hold little political power and where the care of children is devalued relative to working out of the home.

The feminist perspective suggests that men who sexually offend and those who do not exist at different places on the same continuum. Rather than differences this perspective emphasizes the similarities between men. Gender differences result from structural inequities inherent in a hierarchical system. Socialization is the process by which
gender and role expectations are transferred, and work to maintain the status quo.

This section has outlined three themes. First, the power differentials between men and women which allow men to exploit women and children in a variety of ways, including sexually. Second, the role socialization plays in affecting attitudes and beliefs which in turn mediates behavioral responses. Men whose belief systems include the notion that men should exercise power over women and children are more likely to endorse rape myths, violence toward women and adversarial sex beliefs than those who have more egalitarian beliefs. The third theme presented from the feminist perspective was the sexual objectification of women and children. This process dehumanizes the victim while desensitizing the perpetrator. This makes it possible for the perpetrator to act in callous disregard for the rights and feelings of women and children.

To the extent that this perspective bears on the topic of the childhood experiences of sex offenders, we can surmise that boys, generally, are socialized to experience the world differently than girls. From a very early age boys are expected to compete for and take what they want.
from the world around them. They are expected to control their feelings and to suppress traits commonly thought of as feminine. Boys are socialized to initiate and dominate interpersonal relationships. From this perspective, perhaps the most powerful lesson that boys learn is to develop and exercise power in order to control their environment, including the people in it. In choosing not to distinguish between those who commit sex crimes from those who do not, feminist theory leaves unanswered the question posed by the feminist theoretician, Herman (1990): Why not all men?

**Ecological Models:**

As research developed, it became apparent that more sophisticated models were needed. This section will examine three models formulated to explain the development of sex offending behavior (Finklehor, 1984; Faller, 1988; and Wolf 1985). Each of these models suggests that early childhood experiences have a bearing on the development of sex offending behavior. These models were chosen as examples of ecological models because they attempt to understand the offender within the context of his life experience by attending to his personal psychology, his childhood experiences of family and the cultural experiences which
contribute to his behavior. Ecological theories attempt to blend single factor theories into multi-factorial ones.

**Finkelhor's Model:**

Finkelhor (1984) argued that any single factor model will be inadequate to the task of explaining why adults sexually abuse children. In order to address the inherent weakness of single factor models, Finklehor conceptualized a four factor model which he believed would allow for a more accurate discrimination between those who engage in abusive behavior and those who do not.

Finklehor, in reviewing the literature, identified four preconditions which must be met in order for child sexual abuse to take place. He noted that each precondition addresses sexual abuse behavior at the psychological level of the individual and at the socio-cultural level.

Finkelhor's first precondition relates to factors which motivate the offender to sexually abuse a child. According to Finklehor, three types of motivation exist. The first, emotional congruence, suggests that the child meets an emotional need for the molester, and that the emotional meaning the child represents cannot be met by an adult. A second source of motivation is sexual arousal. What about
the child does the molester find sexually arousing? The final source of motivation addresses the notion that many offenders seem blocked from having their needs met in sexually appropriate ways. The formation of intimate relationships with age appropriate others depends on a number of social and psychological abilities. These sources of motivation are not, according to Finklehor, each discrete units but are conceptualized as complementary processes.

Individual factors identified by Finklehor which influence the motivation to sexually abuse a child include: emotional developmental delays, the need to feel powerful and in control, re-enactment of childhood trauma, narcissistic identification with self as a child, childhood sexual experiences which were traumatic or conditioning, witnessing sexual abuse, oedipal conflict, castration anxiety, fear of adult females, and poor social skills. Social-cultural factors associated with motivation include: socialization of males to initiate and dominate sexual relationships, child pornography, erotic portrayal of children by the media, the tendency by men to sexualize their emotional needs, and repressive norms about masturbation and extra-marital sex.
The second precondition identified by Finklehor refers to factors which disinhibit the offender. Finklehor argues that the high incidence of sexual abuse indicates that the moral injunction not to have sex with a child is overcome. The incest taboo is one example of a moral injunction which Finklehor argues inhibits men from engaging in sexual acts with their children.

Among the individual factors identified by Finklehor which disinhibit offenders are: substance abuse, psychosis, impulse disorders, senility, and experiences in family of origin which undermine the notion that children are not appropriate sex partners. This might involve boys witnessing the sexual abuse of their siblings by their fathers, or being molested themselves. Socio-cultural factors include: social toleration of sexual interest in children, weak criminal sanctions against offenders, patriarchal prerogatives for fathers, social toleration for intoxication as an excuse for engaging in sexually abusive activities, child pornography, and men's inability to identify with the needs of children.

Finklehor's third precondition refers to factors which neutralize external inhibitors. External inhibitors are
circumstances in the offender's environment which act to protect children by preventing an offender, who is both uninhibited and motivated, from sexually abusing children.

Individual factors which weaken the external inhibitors which protect children include: disruptions in the mother child dyad including absence, illness, and lack of emotional closeness, family violence such that the mother is abused and/or dominated to such an extent by her spouse that her capacity to protect the child is impaired, social isolation of the family, lack of supervision of the child, and unusual sleeping or rooming situations which put the offender in close proximity to the child. Socio-cultural factors include: lack of social supports for women, barriers to women's equality, erosion of social networks, and an ideology that subordinates the rights of children to the rights of parents.

The final precondition refers to factors which contribute to the child's resistance being overcome. These factors suggest that some children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than others. These factors include: children who are emotionally insecure or deprived, children who lack knowledge about sexual abuse, situations of unusual trust
between the offender and child, and the coercive skill of
the offender. Socio-cultural factors include the lack of
sex education for children, and the social powerlessness of
children.

Finklehor acknowledges that the third and fourth
preconditions are likely to be criticized because they
appear to shift responsibility from the offender and blame
mothers and children. He argues that the third precondition
speaks to the issue of opportunity. An uninhibited and
motivated offender still needs to find the opportunity to
offend. The fourth precondition underscores the point
offenders themselves make in describing their ability to
pick children whose vulnerability make them safer targets
(Banning, 1992).

Finkelhor argues that single factor theories lack the
sophistication necessary to explain the complexity of sex
offending behavior. He also believes that both individual
and a socio-cultural factors contribute to sex offending
behavior. His framework suggests that the interaction
between individual and socio-cultural factors complement and
influence one another. This suggests that interventions
which target factors at both levels are needed to effectively counter any one precondition.

Finkelhor's model assumes that effectively blocking one precondition will prevent child sex abuse. This would shift responsibility for keeping children safe away from sex offenders to mothers and children. Prevention programs aimed at children, although important, are clearly not the most important part of preventing the sexual exploitation of children. To assume that all four preconditions must be met for abuse to occur fosters victim and mother blaming. Faller's (1988) model addresses this weakness.

**Faller's Model:**

Faller's (1988) ecological model focuses on the dynamics of sexual abuse. Faller suggests for sexual abuse to take place two prerequisites must be met. The two prerequisites are a sexual attraction to children and a willingness to act on those sexual feelings. Her model identifies contributing factors located at the cultural, environmental, individual, and family levels. She argues that dynamic interactions take place between the two prerequisites. She also points out that each of the
prerequisites interact with each of the contributing factors which, in turn, interact with one another.

Faller argues that the essential dynamics involve the relative interplay between sexual attraction and the willingness to act upon that attraction. She describes attraction as a learned response, having its roots in childhood. Two aspects Faller considers important to an understanding of sexual attraction are intensity and frequency. She points out that both vary according to the offender. The intensity and frequency of the sexual attraction are conceptualized as independent continuums which interact with one another. Faller believes that sexual attraction by itself will not lead to sexual abuse. For sexual abuse to occur, there must also be a willingness to engage in this activity.

Faller describes willingness as a measure of super-ego development. Faller distinguishes between those offenders who show very little super-ego development, and those whose super-ego development is sound except in the area of sexual abuse. She also notes that poor impulse control can lead to a willingness to act on one's sexual feelings regardless of super-ego strength.
Those with little super-ego are likely to engage in sexual abuse even when they are only mildly attracted. When these perpetrators are caught, remorse is directed to self rather than to others. They rarely consider the harm they have caused others. These offenders are also likely to be involved in a wide range of criminal activities which are motivated by self interest.

Those offenders with well developed super-egos, but with a blind spot in the area of sexual abuse present as law abiding and socially appropriate in all other aspects of their lives. A subgroup of offenders in this group are characterized as having low impulse control coupled with a well developed super-ego. These offenders have intense and pervasive attractions to children. This person, according to Faller, battles his sexual attraction to children; he knows his feelings are wrong, but he inevitably gives in and commits sexual abuse. Faller notes that these men feel remorse after the attack and are more likely to apologize and make a confession when caught.

Faller's model also identifies contributing factors. These factors relate to experiences and are grouped in four categories. The categories Faller uses reflect an attempt
to understand the offender and his crime within the larger context of his life experiences. Faller argues that contributing factors only increase the likelihood of sexual abuse occurring, but are neither necessary nor sufficient cause for sexual abuse. The four categories in Faller's model are cultural, environmental, individual, and family.

At the cultural level, Faller emphasizes factors that socialize boys to internalize the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate the notion that to be masculine one must be in charge, have control over, and dominate the women and children within one's sphere of influence. Boys are socialized to aggressively pursue or, at least, initiate sexual encounters. Girls are socialized to a passive and even a resistant role. Drawing from her clinical work with offenders, Faller reports that a large proportion of male offenders believe that it is a man's prerogative to dominate and control family members, and to have their needs met regardless of the harm this may cause.

Faller also supports the points made by Rush (1980) and Herman (1981) that, until recently, professional writing tended to normalize men's sexual attraction to children and placed the onus on children to be less enticing, and on
mothers to be more protective. Although Faller (1988) believes these attitudes are changing, she states, "It is still easy to find a judge who thinks incarceration is too high a price for a man to pay for a little sexual acting-out with a child..." p.92.

In her view, cultural rationalizations that minimize the harm caused by sexual abuse, or shift responsibility for the abuse away from the offender, normalize the sexual attraction some men have for children. These cultural rationalizations, coupled with the effects of gender specific socialization, contribute to the sexual abuse of children by leading some men to believe that sex with children is normal, and that resistance on the part of women and children is all a part of the game. This increases the likelihood that they will act on their sexual feelings, and discount the resulting harm their behavior causes.

Environmental factors which Faller identifies as contributing to sexual abuse are grouped in the following two categories: economic factors and social isolation. Faller points out that studies cited that show a correlation between socio-economic status and sexual abuse are fraught with problems of sampling bias. These studies are usually
done on people successfully prosecuted, or people reported by social welfare agencies. Samples from either group are likely to over represent the economically disadvantaged. Other factors associated with low socio-economic status are also discounted. For example, over crowding may put potential offenders in close contact with children, but this same over crowding will put protective mothers in close proximity as well. Drawing on her clinical experience, Faller notes that over crowded living arrangements, while present in her sample, were far out numbered by situations where a child's privacy was violated by fathers entering the child's room or by insisting the child sleep with him.

The economic factors that Faller identifies as contributing to child sexual abuse were loss of employment or chronic unemployment. She notes that approximately one third of the offenders in her study were unemployed at the time the sexual abuse took place. She believes that loss of employment has a negative effect on self-esteem, and that this is particularly true for men who have been socialized to believe that to be masculine one must work and support one's family. As noted earlier, (Malamuth, 1981; Check and Malmuth, 1983; Faller, 1988) many men subscribe to attitudes
which exaggerate masculine traits as being the ideal. Faller also points out that fathers out of work are likely to be at home looking after their children. Unsupervised proximity to a child provides the potential offender with ample opportunity to offend.

Social isolation, according to Faller, includes geographical isolation, such as being far removed from neighbors, and psychological isolation, such as being far removed from friends and relatives. Social isolation may be imposed by the offender to keep the secret; it may be imposed by the community which shuns the family. Social isolation may contribute to sexual abuse by limiting the number of appropriate sex partners, or by isolating the family from normative pressures from society which support the incest taboo. Social isolation may precede the sexual abuse and, thus, be a contributing factor, or it might come after the sexual abuse and, thus, prolong the abuse.

Individual factors cited by Faller as important include having had a harsh or deprived childhood, traumatic sexual experience in childhood and a history of substance abuse. Faller reported that, of the offenders in her study, an overwhelming number described childhood's characterized as
harsh and deprived. These experiences included violent discord between parents, parental separation, and divorce. The offenders reported having had multiple caretakers, including foster care. Alcoholism was also a prevalent experience in families of origin. Many reported being physically abused, unjustly punished or scapegoated. The majority of these offenders identified their relationship with their mothers as most problematical. They felt rejected by mothers who, they believe, failed to protect them from abusive fathers, stepfathers or boyfriends. Faller noted that these men lack the skills to form intimate relationships and have difficulty showing affection in non-sexual ways. These deficits, coupled with their anger at their mothers, are displaced toward their spouse and then on to their children.

The second factor in the childhood histories of offenders was a traumatic sexual experience. Faller notes that these sexual experiences were not always viewed as traumatic. This was especially true for pedophiles, and for incestuous fathers acting in either a custodial or a non-custodial role. She also notes that, in many cases, the
offender was not sexually abused directly but was a witness to abuse.

The third factor identified with the offenders in the sample is substance abuse. Faller believes that the use of drugs and alcohol by offenders is functional in two ways. The first is as a disinhibitor; the offender can engage in behaviors while intoxicated that he would not engage in sober. This also provides the offender with the built in excuse of: "I would never have done that if I had known what I was doing". Secondly, intoxication functions as a way for offenders to self medicate, and to blunt the feelings of shame and guilt some offenders experience after an assault.

It is the factors at the family level which Faller finds most problematic. She argues that many of the family factors cited in the literature shift responsibility away from the abuser and onto the victim or the non-offending parent. Her experience does not support many of the suppositions found in the family systems literature. She disagrees with the notion that incest is a way for individuals to ward off family disintegration.

Faller dismisses the notion that family factors focusing on the non-offending parent or the victim can lead
to an understanding of sexual abuse. Her sample of incestuous families included mothers who could be described as "inadequate" but, more often, mothers were well-functioning. She found some children who had taken on aspects of their mother's parental role, but far more who had not. In addition, more than half the victims in her study were five years old or younger when the abuse began and, therefore, not realistic candidates for role reversal. In the few cases where mothers knew that the sexual abuse was taking place prior to it being reported, Faller reports that most of these women were terrified of their husbands. Sexual dysfunction was found in about 50% of the cases but was most often the husbands refusing to have sex with their spouses rather than wives withholding sex. Faller also dismisses the notion that the victim accepts the sexual role with the abuser. She did note that children were prematurely sexualized as a result of the abuse and appeared seductive. Only a very few children reported having any positive feelings about the abuse and Faller states that those children were extremely deprived and neglected.

Faller's model argues for a reformulation of the family dynamics theory which she believes blames the mothers and
children. Her model acknowledges that cultural, environmental, individual and family factors contribute to, but do not cause, sexual abuse. According to Faller, sexual abuse can only happen when there is an adult with sexual feelings toward children and the willingness to act upon them. Faller's model incorporates many of the findings by feminist researchers especially within the context of family dynamics and at the cultural level she notes that misogynist beliefs contribute to the development of offending behaviors. As well she incorporates aspects of psychoanalytic literature in her discussion of personality development and impulse control.

Faller (1988) and Finklehor (1984) argue that single factor theories are not sophisticated enough to explain the complexities of sexual abuse. To begin to understand the sex offender multi-factorial models must be developed. This shift in emphasis away from concentrating on the sex crime toward identifying and understanding the motivation to commit the crime suggests the need to look more closely at the childhood experiences of sex offenders.
Wolf's Model:

In a third ecological model, Wolf (1985) suggests that potentiators in the childhood histories of sex offenders, when coupled with certain personality characteristics, interact to form an addiction cycle. Here, the offender uses sexual fantasy to practice the deviance and to desensitize himself to what he is doing, in fact or in fantasy. Rationalizations and justifications which the offender uses to lessen his guilt or embarrassment become incorporated into the fantasy.

Drawing from his clinical practice, Wolf (1985) reports the following childhood experiences as being most commonly described: 47% of the offenders report a sense of isolation from the other members of their family of origin, 37% report witnessing family violence, 30% report being physically abused, 27% report being sexually abused, 23% report being emotionally abused, and 17% report witnessing sexual abuse. The personality characteristics most commonly associated with the offenders seen in his practice include narcissism, poor self-image, defensiveness, ruminativeness, social isolation, and a sexual pre-occupation.
According to Wolf, these offenders experienced various forms of family violence which predisposed them to be attracted to deviant sexual practices. This, coupled with personality characteristics which make it difficult to form intimate and mutually respective relationships where their emotional needs could be met, increases the likelihood of the development of a sex offending pattern of behavior.

Wolf believes the sexual pre-occupation which sex offenders evidence is especially significant. The deviant fantasy as it is rehearsed in masturbation establishes cues in terms of sexual objects, for example, children, and in terms of places, for example, parks. As mentioned earlier, also incorporated into the fantasy are the self serving rationales for being wherever and doing whatever. For example, an offender who knows he should avoid parks where children are playing will find himself in a park, not to meet children, but only to take a short cut to the store. Rather than initiating contact himself, his fantasy will have the child initiating contact, perhaps, by inviting him to play. During this fantasy development process deviant sexual arousal becomes heightened as the inhibitions against
committing an assault weaken. According to Wolf, the result is a classic addiction cycle.

The addiction cycle Wolf describes is set in motion by the offenders' poor self image. Poor self-esteem leads to an expectation of rejection. Expecting to be rejected, the offender instead withdraws and, otherwise, engages in non-assertive behavior. To counter his feelings of low self worth the offender then turns to compensatory fantasies, sexual escapism, and grooming the target. The offender's attraction to the target increases and he spends more time with her. It is at this point in the cycle the abuse takes place. The offender may feel some transitory guilt but, if so, pushes it away. Here, the cycle is complete. The offender is again facing feelings of poor self worth which has been reinforced by his abusive behavior. Wolf's model draws heavily on the learning models discussed earlier while paying attention to the childhood experiences affecting personality development. As an ecological model Wolf's model is weakened by his inattention to the effects of culture which both Faller's and Finklehor's models include. Wolf does attend to the individual and family levels and refers to his model as an ecological model.
Summary:

This chapter presented a number of theoretical perspectives beginning with Freud and Erikson's developmental models. Freud's work formed the basis upon which the early research on sex offenders was conducted. The bias against the victim, prevalent at this time is clear in these early studies. This bias was due in large part to the fact that Freud's seduction theory had been dismissed by his peers and eventually abandoned by Freud himself. Children making accusations of sexual abuse against their fathers were thought to be remembering long ago fantasies rather than real events. Some of the factors identified from the literature of that time does suggest that experiences in childhood are important to the development of sex offending behavior. Contributing factors identified were neglect, early and inappropriate sexual experiences, emotional and physical abuse, lack of positive parenting, lack of positive male role modeling, and alcohol abuse. Freud outlined a developmental theory which predicts a healthy outcome provided the child's needs are met. When those needs are not met, or when development is jeopardized
through traumatic experiences, Freud's model suggests a more problematic outcome.

Erikson's (1950) psycho-social developmental theory emphasized the interaction between the child and his social environment and the relationship between meeting the child's needs and the development of social competence. Studies were presented that show that sex offenders lack social skills and have poor self esteem. Erikson's theory predicts that male children who successfully resolve the crisis represented at each developmental stage will develop the ability to form mutually respectful relationships.

Other psychological viewpoints (Ault, 1983) were examined to understand how early childhood experiences affect adult functioning. The ability to enter and participate in a mutually respectful relationship is at odds with relationships characterized by sexual abuse where a sex offender satisfies their needs at the expense of others (Faller, 1988). In this regard, Kohut (1977) predicts that this ability is enhanced when a child experiences love and acceptance from parents and is able to introject this notion of self worth. Chodorow (1978) suggests that boys because their identification becomes
fused with separation have a more difficult time with intimacy than girls whose identification becomes fused with attachment.

One model with roots in the psychoanalytic literature is the trauma model. This model offers a useful theoretical perspective from which to view the development of sexual offending behaviors for those offenders who were victimized. It has not been used to explore the effects of more benign sexual experiences in childhood, nor has it been used as a framework to look at non-sexual experiences that may play a role in the development of sex offending behavior.

Learning theory, (Marshall and Barbaree, 1990) provides an alternative perspective from which to understand the development of sex offending behavior. This perspective suggests that behavior is learned and that observation alone can result in children attempting a new behavior (Bandura, 1965; Bandura, 1977). Overt or covert rewards will encourage the behavior. Learning models have been used to inform addiction research, which has, in turn, been used to explain the difficulty some offenders have in giving up sexually abusive behaviors (Laws and Marshall, 1990). This
perspective suggests that cultural mores and myths are also learned from those with whom we share our environment.

Family systems, a third perspective, argues that sex offending is symptomatic of problems within the dynamics of the family and is maintained, if not consciously then unconsciously, by all members of the family (Bentovim, 1988). Structural aspects of the family which are seen, from this perspective, as needing attention include roles, subsystems and boundaries (Alexander, 1985). Family systems offers observations on what is happening in the moment, but has little to say about how the behavior began. Like the psychoanalytic perspective, which assumes everyone is an equal and ignores the power differentials which exist between abuser and victim, the family systems perspective argues that everyone has a part to play in maintaining the abusive pattern.

Feminists brought the issue of sex offending to public attention and, in so doing, advocated for the rights of women and children to live free of abuse. Sex offending behavior is seen from this perspective as an example of the disregard a male dominated society has for women and children (Rush, 1980; Dworkin, 1978). The roots of this
disregard are in a cultural and hierarchical model which socializes people to believe that males are more valued than females, and that adults are more valued than children. Where other perspectives ignored the issue of power and control, the feminist perspective argues that these are fundamental to gaining an understanding of sex offenders. Feminists also point to the sexual objectification of women and children as another contributing factor which leads men to commit sex crimes against women and children.

This chapter examined three ecological models, which, by their very nature, attempt to blend our knowledge about the individual offender with the cultural and environmental factors known to influence the development of sex offending behavior (Finklehor, 1984; Faller, 1988; and Wolf, 1985). Finklehor and Faller highlight individual characteristics and construct models with an individual perspective at the center. Faller, for example, argues that the offender's superego is immature. Her model outlines two prerequisites which must be satisfied. The offender must be sexually attracted to children and must be willing to act on that sexual attraction. She also identifies a number of contributing factors variously located at the cultural,
environmental, individual and family level. A hallmark of her model is the dynamic interaction which takes place between the prerequisites and the contributing factors.

Finklehor identifies four preconditions which must be met before sexual abuse can occur. The first speaks to the issue of motivation and has similarities to Faller's concept of sexual attraction. His second speaks to disinhibition. Like Faller he sees the need to overcome the moral injunctions which prohibit adults from having sex with children. His third precondition, speaks to opportunity, and, here, Finklehor begins to shift the focus from the offender to the mother. Like the Family Systems perspective, Finklehor argues that circumstances arise which prevent mothers from protecting their children. Finklehor's fourth precondition speaks to issues of vulnerability in the child herself which invite the abuse. These last two issues are covered by Faller as well, but unlike Finklehor, who considers them preconditions, which must be satisfied for sexual abuse to occur, she identifies them as factors which contribute to the likelihood of sexual abuse occurring. Faller emphasizes that these factors do not constitute a necessary or sufficient cause for sexual abuse. Sexual
abuse will only take place, according to her, if an adult is sexually attracted to children and is willing to act on that attraction. If those prerequisites are met, Faller believes, the offender will find both the child and the opportunity despite whatever protective and preventive measures are in place to protect children.

The final ecological model presented was developed by Wolf (1985). He believes childhood experiences play a role in creating the potential for abuse later in life. This concept is similar to Faller's contributing factors. Children who witness physical or sexual abuse, or who were themselves abused emotionally, physically or sexually, who witness family violence and who grow up with a sense of isolation from family and community are at risk of becoming offenders. Faller and Wolf agree that children who experience harsh and abusive childhood’s are at risk. Wolf's model describes childhood experiences interacting with psychological characteristics commonly associated with sex offenders. This interaction can have the effect of isolating the offender in a cycle characterized by poor self-esteem, withdrawal, compensatory fantasy, and finally
offending which confirms, in the offender's mind, his lack of self worth.

Over the course of time the research on sex offenders became more sophisticated. An aspect of this sophistication argues that the offender must be understood within the context of family and society. Childhood experiences which impair the development of prosocial behavior and self esteem, and which increase the likelihood of these crimes being committed are an integral part of this context.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction:

This chapter describes the methodology used to explore the question posed by this study. The methodological issues discussed in this chapter are: design, sample, measure, validity, content validity, reliability and analysis. The chapter concludes with a short summary.

A qualitative design was determined to be the best choice given the nature of the question, the state of knowledge on the question posed in this thesis and the resources available to the investigator. An exploration of these issues will clarify the rationale for choosing a qualitative over a quantitative design.

Data for this study came from interviews conducted with five male respondents. The section on sampling presents the rationale and criteria which guided the selection of these respondents. The major strength of a qualitative design is that it directs the investigator to purposively seek respondents rich in the type of knowledge needed to answer
the question posed by the study. The criteria established ensures that respondents will have the type of information needed. Each of the five respondents interviewed exceeded the established criteria and proved to be valuable sources of information.

The measure used in this study was a standardized open-ended questionnaire developed by the author. The process and rationale behind the eleven questions asked and the content areas covered by it are outlined. In addition to the eleven questions, which were posed in the same order to each of the respondents, a number of probes were employed to ensure that each respondent had ample opportunity to fully share their perceptions on the question under study.

Validity as it relates to qualitative design, refers to the notion that the researcher is the instrument and is engaged with the respondent in a very personal way. Every effort was made to ensure that the participants were fully engaged in the process. To elicit the maximum amount of relevant information, the researcher must stay focused on the interview while establishing a level of rapport with the respondent. Validity at this level can be a relatively subjective experience as the respondent and interviewer join
in an exploration of the question. Efforts to increase validity will be described.

Content validity refers to the degree to which the questions asked reflect the purpose of the study. The steps taken to develop meaningful questions are described. Another aspect affecting content validity are the steps taken to gather and protect the data. These steps are outlined in this section.

Reliability refers to the degree to which the results can be replicated by other researchers and the degree to which the results can be generalized to the larger population from which the sample was drawn. The flexibility inherent in qualitative designs tends to boost validity while lowering reliability. Steps to maximize reliability were taken and are discussed.

Analysis involves identifying, coding and categorizing the patterns which arise from the data. The process of how the data collected was analyzed is described. The four stage method of data analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and elucidated by Paton (1990) provided the guidelines for analysis of data gathered in this study.
Design:

Since no systemic study of therapists perceptions of childhood experiences and their possible link to the subsequent development of a sexually abusive pattern of behavior was found in the literature, this study represents an initial exploration of the issue. Exploratory studies do not lend themselves to hypothesis testing. The strength of an exploratory study lies in its ability to generate questions and to describe the character of a phenomenon. Interviewing therapists about their perceptions of the childhood experiences of their sex offending clients is a conservative and appropriate first step.

The core element of the question is: What childhood experiences, if any, influence the development of sex offending behavior? The decision to pose this question to therapists of sex offenders rather than directly to offenders was made for reasons of methodology and logistics. Methodologically, it appeared that, although the literature suggests that sex offenders have childhood experiences which may impact their social functioning and may influence them to commit sex crimes, many of the studies which attend to childhood experiences are decades old and come from a
perspective which has been critiqued for a number reasons. It seemed prudent, therefore, to explore with therapists their perceptions of the question. An in-depth exploration of perceptions would best be accomplished using qualitative methodology. This methodology directs the researcher to choose information rich respondents such as these therapists and encourages the exploration necessary.

A second reason for choosing to interview therapists rather than offenders, was the logistics involved in gaining access to offenders. It was much easier to access therapists than it was to access offenders. It was thought therapists would draw on their experiences with many offenders when discussing their perceptions of the childhood experiences of their clients and in this way be a different source of information on this topic. The purpose of these interviews was to identify experiential childhood themes that would be useful in furthering social work knowledge of sex offenders. Interviewing therapists is an appropriate first step.

**Sample:**

Therapists experienced with male sex offenders represent a rich source of information. Most of the
research and writing on this subject originates from therapists. Research on therapist attitudes (Owens and Dewey, 1987) however, showed that health professionals were inclined to give low estimates of frequency and to take a more punitive attitude toward the abuser. Therapists who work with offenders were not identified in this study and so it is impossible to say whether they would have similar attitudes. Owens and Dewey noted that as a group, respondents saw sexual abuse as creating serious problems for the victim, especially in their sexual and marital relationships.

Attias and Goodwin (1985) surveyed physicians, psychologists and family counselors and reported they had a great deal of practical experience, knowledge, and management skills in treating sexual abuse victims. This study did not differentiate between therapists who work with offenders from those who work with victims. Many therapists are active in presenting their findings, but it would appear that no surveys based on their perceptions about the childhood experiences of sex offenders have been done.

To ensure that informants in this study were knowledgeable the following criteria were established:
- that the respondents work in a private practice,
- that the respondents have worked for, at least, 1 year with sex offenders,
- that the respondents be educated to at least a Masters level.

Subjects in private practice would be more likely to have developed an eclectic approach to their work, be less likely to have absorbed a particular theoretical orientation developed at an institutional level, be more likely to have explored their client's childhood and would, therefore, represent a rich source of information about the phenomenon of interest to this study. Finally it was thought that private practitioners would be more likely to work with a different types of offenders and with offenders of different ages. Finally, private practitioners were more likely than those employed by a government institution treating sex offenders, to be treating survivors of sexual abuse. As a result of this broader experience in the area of sexual abuse generally it was thought that private therapists might offer perceptions about the differential experiences of survivors who offend and those who do not become offenders. Given the possibility that public and private therapists
might have different perceptions on the question under study, and, given the small sample size of this study, I chose to limit this study to private practitioners rather than risk confounding the data by inadvertently including two groups.

The second criteria, a minimum of one year working with sex offenders, would ensure that the therapist's perceptions would have an experiential foundation. Because of the second hand nature of the information, one must assume that the data gathered will reflect an integration of knowledge gained through experience, observation, reading and reflection on the part of the therapist. An accurate measure of the therapist's perception is not necessarily indicative of what his clients might have experienced. To increase the likelihood that the therapist will relate something of the experiences of his clients' childhood, it is desirable that his practice should be of long enough duration so that he has had the opportunity to gain knowledge of these experiences.

Although it was unlikely that therapists would have a private practice and not have at least a Masters degree in a relevant field it was not impossible either. The third
criteria limited respondents who were not educated to at least this level. The rationale for this criteria was fostered by the belief that people educated to a Masters level would have developed a theoretical framework that would encourage them to integrate knowledge and experience and to, therefore, have a more informed perception of the question posed by this study. A second, less critical reason for interviewing people who had completed a post graduate degree is the belief that they would empathize with the importance of doing research at a Masters level. Sharing a common experience enhances the possibility for establishing rapport. The above criteria increases the likelihood that well informed subjects will be chosen.

A sampling frame of eighteen therapists was constructed by soliciting their names through a variety of sources: colleagues, professional associations, and the Red Book (a resource guide of social service agencies and private practitioners published for the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia). Patton (1990) explains that, among the strengths of qualitative research, is the power which it derives from purposeful sampling. This technique increases the likelihood that the respondents chosen will represent a
rich source of information. It is this richness which allows qualitative studies to breathe life into descriptive information.

All eighteen therapists were sent a letter identifying the researcher and the nature of his affiliation with UBC, and a description of the study, including its purpose and the time commitment asked of them, (Appendix A). Of the eighteen letters sent, six replies were received. One therapist was interested but too busy to take part at the time; subsequent efforts to establish a time to meet with this therapist were not successful. Of the five remaining therapists, all were interviewed at the time and location of their choice. Prior to the interview, they were given a consent form to read and sign, (Appendix B).

Table 1, presents the descriptive data collected from the five therapists taking part in this study. Each respondent was assigned a fictitious name to ensure confidentiality while maintaining readability. These names will remain consistent throughout this study.
### Table 1

**Descriptive Information of Respondents and Their Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Al</th>
<th>Bob</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>Doug</th>
<th>Ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years experience working with S.O.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of S.O. seen in the last year</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>*100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range of S.O. seen in practice</td>
<td>4-80</td>
<td>22-72</td>
<td>4-19</td>
<td>15-65</td>
<td>14-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of individual session</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>**24+</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>5-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of group sessions</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>12-24</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education:</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>M.Ed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This therapist does pre-sentence assessments which explains the disproportionate number of offenders seen.

** This therapist reports seeing offenders once per week for a minimum six months and for as long as two years.
Table 1 indicates that all respondents exceeded the criteria set for experience level. The range in years of experience working with sex offenders was from 2 to 8 years; the group mean is 5.4 years. Another measure of experience is the number of sex offenders seen in the past year. The range was 10 to 100, indicating that the therapists chosen for this study had the experience upon which to base their perceptions. All the therapists conducted individual sessions; three of the five also engaged sex offenders in group work. All the respondents had achieved Masters degrees and two had attained Doctorates in psychology. The therapists taking part in this study were well educated, experienced with sex offenders, were regularly seeing sex offenders in their practices and over a long enough period of time to have an informed opinion about client experiences as children and how those experiences might influence their sex offending behavior. These respondents represent a rich source of information on the topic addressed in this study.

**Measure:**

A semi-structured interview format, commonly employed in qualitative studies of this type was implemented here. An interview guide consisting of eleven questions along with
a number of probes was developed, (Appendix C). The questions were asked of each respondent in a specific order. According to their answers, respondents were asked appropriate probes to ensure each question was fully explored. The items chosen for this interview guide were arranged so that the informants were taken from the general to the specific and then returned to the general. For example, the first question asked therapists to describe their own theory of how sex offending behavior begins and the last question invites the informant to add anything of importance that occurred to him during the interview. The various content areas explored included:
- the therapist's own theory of sex offending,
- the degree to which therapists probed into the childhood experiences of their clients,
- the degree to which clients disclosed a history of sex abuse,
- therapists' perceptions of the impact of early sexual experiences that, although not abusive, may inform the question under study,
- non-sexual factors therapists believe important.
Validity:

Validity refers to the degree to which the questions posed and the probes employed explored the issues this study was meant to address. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of therapists about the childhood experiences of their sex offending clients. Although primarily interested in the sexual development of clients, the study also elicited perceptions about factors considered important by the therapists interviewed. This would indicate the therapists felt comfortable in the interview, were sincerely engaged in exploring the issue and were answering the questions as fully as possible. They were willing to share with the interviewer their perceptions of their clients broader childhood experiences.

As mentioned above, validity generally refers to the probability that the measurement tool, in this case a semi-structured interview consisting of eleven questions, measures what it purports to. In qualitative research, the question of validity is also dependent on the methodological skill, sensitivity and integrity of the researcher (Patton, 1990). As well, validity can be compromised by the researcher's ability to stay focused and attentive (Guba and
Lincoln, 1981). The interactive nature of a qualitative interview provides the vigilant researcher the opportunity to make ongoing validity checks by making clarifying statements and by initiating probes to ensure the question is understood and the respondent has the opportunity to give as much information as possible.

**Content Validity:**

In developing the interview questions, advice was sought from a variety of sources, including a child psychologist with The Greater Vancouver Mental Health Society who is developing programs and conducting research on sexually intrusive children, an executive director of a residential program for adolescent male sex offenders and a treatment counsellor at Special Services to the Court. The questions were pre-tested and discussed with two individuals knowledgeable in this area. Questions were developed to access the depth and breadth of the respondents perceptual knowledge about their clients childhood experiences.

Each interview was recorded on audio tape and each tape was transcribed by the author. This provides a hard copy of the interview and has the advantage of ensuring only what
was said during the interviews is used as data. This method further reduces the threat to validity from researcher bias.

The concept, in qualitative research, of researcher as tool, implies that interaction effects between respondent and researcher are important factors in enhancing or diminishing the validity of a study. The most carefully constructed instrument would have little validity if the relationship between the respondent and researcher was not based on mutual trust and respect. In an effort to establish rapport with the respondents, each was encouraged to choose a time and location for the interview which best suited them. Respondents were thanked in advance for their participation and assured their contribution would be valuable. The consent form was carefully explained and a copy left with them for their files. Respondents were asked to begin by completing a short demographic survey as a way of easing them into the task of sharing information prior to the main interview. In a further effort to establish an air of trust and collegiality between researcher and respondent, each respondent was given a copy of the interview guide to follow. Respondents' copy of the interview did not contain
the probes which, if included, may have affected the answers they gave.

Each interview consisted of eleven questions which were always presented in the same order. Probes were used to ensure that each answer was developed as fully as possible. The questions focused on the sexual experiences of children with the view that sex offenders may have a different sexual developmental history than non-offenders. Although focused in this way, those interviewed felt comfortable in bringing up other factors they felt were important to the development of sexually abusive patterns of behavior. Given the question of validity from the perspective that the relationship between researcher and respondent is especially important in a qualitative exploratory study, each respondent did his best to provide information rich in detail.

**Reliability:**

The question of reliability is most problematic in a qualitative study precisely because of the relationship which develops between the researcher and the respondent over the course of the interview. Each person comes to this task with unique characteristics which inevitably have an effect on the course of the interview. Results that can be
replicated are thought to have greater value. In an effort to enhance the reliability of this study, the methodology has been described carefully. Sufficient specific information has been provided so the study may be replicated. However, little can be done to replicate the relationship between the researcher and respondent. The personal characteristics each brings to the interview coupled with situational variables, like time of day, setting, alertness, and distractions, contribute to the uniqueness of an interview and influence its replicability.

**Analysis**

Patton (1990) describes content analysis in qualitative research as a process of identifying, coding and categorizing the primary patterns which arise from the data. He argues that this is an inductive process in the sense that the patterns, themes and categories come directly from the data. Another point Patton makes concerns the boundaries that define categories or emerging themes. They must be flexible enough to contain and make sense of the data they each describe, while being distinct enough to exclude data which does not belong. Data that overlap these
boundaries indicate a problem with the way categories have been defined.

Glaser and Straus (1967), in describing the need to ground theory in data, have developed a four stage method of analysis they term the constant comparative method. Like Patton, they stress the importance of having categories evolve from the data. The stages of analysis essentially describe their view of theory building and include:

1. Incidents applicable to each category are constantly compared with one another, allowing the categories to reach a point where they define themselves.

2. Clear boundaries are established when integrating categories to ensure they remain rooted to the theory from which they derive. In this way, categories form a bridge between data and theory.

3. Delimiting the theory refers to the natural expansion or adaptation which takes place as new information is integrated into existing theory.

4. Writing the theory is a further integrative step which evolves around the interpretive task of analysis. At this stage, the researcher describes how the information
gleaned from the study further informs the theory under construction.

The study under discussion in this thesis drew upon the analytic techniques discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Each session was tape recorded. Each tape was transcribed and several copies made of each. A highlight pen was used to isolate factors pertinent to the study. During the process of isolating factors, the categories they described became apparent. These categories both evolved from the data and reached back and informed the theoretical framework out of which this study grew. As well as being distinct from one another, the three identified categories were linked by an overriding theme which emerged from the interviews.

**Summary:**

This chapter has discussed the methodological framework employed in this study. Purposeful sampling was chosen as a technique for increasing the likelihood that respondents included in the study will provide information rich in detail. The demographic information gathered from each respondent lent credence to this method of sampling especially as a way of ameliorating the negative effects of
a small sample size, as was the case in this study. The credibility of any research hinges in large part on how well the researcher addressed the questions of reliability and validity. The efforts to strengthen validity and reliability were detailed. The last section of this chapter described the way in which content from the interviews will be analyzed.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

From the content analysis a number of factors were identified. As these factors emerged they began to define levels of experience. These evolved into the three major categories discussed in this chapter. Each category and the data supporting it will be presented in a separate section. The first section will describe individual factors; the second, family environmental factors; the third cultural factors. A final section will describe the respondents' perceptions of the evolutionary process of becoming an offender. The chapter will conclude with a short summary.

At the individual level, factors are identified by the respondents which, while not explaining sex offending behavior, are thought to interfere with the ability to form and maintain mutually supportive and respectful relationships. Offenders are perceived as emotionally needy but lacking the necessary skills to meet their needs appropriately.
This first section will describe the individual factors respondents felt describe sex offenders. This category includes faulty attachment, unmet emotional needs, low self-esteem, social isolation, felt lack of belonging, felt sense of inadequacy, immature emotional development, poor social skills, and lack of internal controls. This data is graphically displayed, along with the degree of respondent support, in Table 2 on page 128.

At the family environmental level sex offenders were described as coming from homes characterized by abuse and neglect. Besides not meeting children's needs, respondents felt that offenders have taken their cues for how to behave in the world from models in their families of origin.

The factors which were included in the family level of experience include sexual abuse, violence and neglect, poor personal boundaries, inadvertent sexualizing experiences, parents unable to handle the child's expression of sexuality, premature sexualization, and lack of caring role model. This data is displayed in Table 3.

At the cultural level offenders were described as integrating many of the myths perpetrated by a sexist society. Many of these myths are promoted through the print
and visual media which further socialize young people by providing models which guide their behavior. Factors included in this category are male socialization to use power and control to meet emotional needs, to be attracted to less powerful females, and to initiate sexual contact. Sexual exploitation by the media, pornography, sexual abuse as a cultural phenomenon, and lack of sex education are also contributing factors. These are displayed in table 4.

By themselves these categories of experience can only partly explain sex offending behavior. Imagining the interactions between factors within each category, and between categories, the dynamic complexity of the problem begins to emerge. Frameworks which take an ecological approach, that is considering sex offenders within the context of his life experience, are supported.

Over the course of the interviews with the therapists, one over-riding theme emerged. Each respondent described sexual offending behavior as an evolutionary process beginning in childhood. Each respondent had perceptions about how this process began and how it continued into adulthood. Their perceptions on this process, each containing unique elements, were in large part, driven by
their experience with sex offenders. Those perceptions which describe the evolutionary process of becoming a sex offender, and how childhood experiences play a part in this development, will be presented in the final section.

For the purposes of confidentiality, each respondent was assigned a fictitious name. These names are used throughout this study, both in the tables and in the data presentation.

**Individual Factors**

The respondents taking part in this study identified a number of characteristics they perceived as both common to sex offenders and as contributing to their offending pattern of behavior. Table 2 lists the coding properties of these categories and the degree of agreement shown by each of the respondents.
Table 2

Male Therapists' Perceptions of the Individual Factors Influencing Male Sex Offenders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Factor</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Al</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faulty attachments</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unmet emotional needs</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low self esteem</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt lack of belonging</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt sense of inadequacy</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immature emotional dev.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor social skills</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of internal controls</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Carl, with an MSW degree, mentioned individual factors much less frequently than did respondents with degrees in psychology. Although it may be tempting to explain this in terms of their comparative educational backgrounds, comparisons based on such a small sample size would be suspect. A more likely explanation is that this respondent works exclusively with children who are, for the most part, acting out against peers. His clients may be perceived as being less socially isolated, less inadequate, less immature and having similar social skills and self esteem as other children seen in his clinical practice. Finally, a perspective which emphasizes sex offending as an ongoing developmental process would suggest that, in the case of children, personality is still in the process of forming and the characteristics which are more noticeable in adults would be less obvious in children. Because it is so pronounced this anomaly invites speculation; however, the small sample size precludes conclusive statements.

This section examines the various individual factors identified. These factors, although listed in the table as separate items, are best understood as interactive.
The perception by four of the respondents that sex offenders experienced faulty attachments with primary caregivers may be the foundation upon which the other individual factors developed. Faulty attachment may impact on the individuals self-esteem, his sense of belonging, and his sense of adequacy.

Al described faulty attachment to a primary caregiver as a childhood experience common to many of the offenders he works with, and as an impediment to the formation of appropriate relationships. He said, "I think many of these people start out with attachment breaks and poor bonding. Because of that they have a difficult time forming relationships with people their own age, as adults". He went on to elaborate a process he has noted in offenders:

They tend to have fantasy attachments, they engage in a sort of self parenting process. Rather than getting nurturing from parents or important family members, not always of course but this is often a factor, it's a kind of narcissistic type of development where they didn't get their needs met as kids so they are getting their needs met through fantasy, or imaginary aspects of relationships with kids. There is a kind of role
reversal where kids are providing them with the nurturing and warmth.

Al perceives a process leading from attachment breaks and unmet emotional needs to the development of a fantasy where their emotional needs are met by the children they molest. His description is a good example of the interactive quality which takes place between factors within a category. Unmet needs at an individual level motivate a fantasy where needs are met by children who love the offender. The motivation to feel close, accepted, and loved was not met by caretakers in childhood.

Similarly, Ed, describes an interaction between attachment and social isolation. He describes attachment in terms of motivation, and as an emotional need. He perceives the offender as isolated but needing to feel close. He said:

If you look at a person who doesn't know how, isn't comfortable with sexuality, and they need to feel attached, bonded to somebody, so they take a kid who is not going to be threatening, they - can be in control, and have sex with this kid out of their need to kind of bond with someone in a non-threatening way - they choose a defenseless person without much power and
then they can work on that. The function for them is that they are looking for someone they can feel close to, and they can't feel close to a peer because it is too threatening, so they choose a powerless person and use them as a target.

Like Al, Ed identifies immature emotional development as a consequence of faulty attachment. Implicit in both descriptions is low self-esteem, social isolation, and a felt lack of belonging.

Bill was even more emphatic: "Faulty attachment is a problem with every one of them." This respondent goes on to describe that by faulty attachment he means:

the failure to take inside themselves the images and feelings of strong caretakers that they can carry around inside them as an ongoing resource. I can't think of any guy (offender that he worked with) that had a secure attachment.

Bill describes the consequences of faulty attachment from the same perspective developed by Kohut (1977). He goes on to describe how he perceives faulty attachment impacting self-esteem in the fixated pedophile:
Self-esteem in the most fixated men almost becomes a tertiary issue, they can't afford to think about their self-esteem, they're too developmentally hungry. Self-esteem, which is an ego trait or quality belonging to the adult self, almost doesn't exist in these men. Although he perceives self-esteem as an important issue, he does not think that offending is motivated entirely by a lack of self-esteem. He believes:

That (self-esteem) is a part of it but I think that tends to get over emphasized - that they are doing it for ego gratification and to be built up. I think much more deep is the need for sheer partnership, for a peer. They return to whatever age they left off in childhood. It's just going back to where they left off and starting from there, but they don't have any equipment for growing past it either.

This respondent sees faulty attachment affecting self-esteem and emotional maturity. Like the preceding respondents he sees offenders motivated by unmet needs and specifically the need for emotional closeness.

Doug described two perceptions he has on the issue of attachment. The first describes a traumatic bonding where
the child lacking a healthy environment with loving caretakers will bond to what is available. It is his contention that boys raised in homes dominated by hostile, aggressive fathers will bond with their father and subsequently take on those attributes. The child's need for acceptance meshes with the trauma of family violence. He says:

With a real hostile, aggressive father who insists that you are going to be a man - you know, I'm not going to have any woose living in this house, you know, stand up and take care of yourself, fight for yourself, defend yourself, and the child really wanting to identify and to belong and to be accepted and wanting to fit in might want to align himself with a father like that.

Doug also believes that object relations can be applied at a cultural level. Lacking a healthy attachment that allows for the development of intimate and healthy relationships, many sex offenders introject unhealthy sexual objects. He believes this may account for the sexual objectification of women and children. It is his view that in objectifying sexuality the sense of inter-personal relationship and mutuality is removed from it. He notes:
In a way we objectify our own sexuality. We talk about objectifying women as sex objects, you know as sex toys or whatever. But men are objectifying their own sexuality, they become an object, they become a penis not an interpersonal relationship. The women's movement has made a lot of noise about being objectified; but the other side of that is that men are objectified too - we do it to ourselves. We've separated our sexuality from our personhood. Sex has become the object, whether it is women as sex objects or penis as sex object. Sex becomes the object to play with whether our own or somebody else's, and not an interpersonal process, not a joining together, not a communication, and not a mutuality.

Within the context of attachment the respondents spoke about a process. Faulty attachment was variously described as impeding the formation of healthy relationships with peers, as a resource and model to draw upon for how to be in a relationship, as motivated by the need to feel close to someone non-threatening, and similarly as a need to identify with fathers. From an object relations perspective, one respondent suggested that sexual behavior is objectified by
men, and that by doing so men avoid the emotional commitment that a reciprocal and mutually respectful relationship demands. Attachment was also perceived as impacting one's self-esteem, felt lack of belonging, as contributing to immature emotional development and to social isolation.

This interactional quality between factors is imbedded in descriptions throughout this report. Bill, for example, perceived sex offenders as having a felt sense of inadequacy which he believes comes from a lack of normal childhood sexual experiences. He distinguishes between rapists and pedophiles as follows:

What I see is a lot of inadequacy. I would say that maybe sexual education may be normal, in terms of learning the details, but the playing doctor, the natural, or common, or statistically average sexual experiences tend not to have happened. They (sex offenders) tend to be isolated people as kids with few resources, non-supportive home resources so that in the case of pedophiles they tend to be rather frightened and inhibited people. There is a kind of closing off of their adult development in the sexual area. In the case of rapists, I see no development
of tenderness. There is an angry, hungry, psychopathic mentality which can't tolerate an ambiguous and tender relationship.

Because appropriate and healthy information about sexuality and relationships is not forthcoming at home, Bill believes offenders learn on the street. He felt, "There is likely going to be large gaps and misinformation and teaching them certain attitudes that will really stunt their growth and their outlook." On this same theme of adequacy he went on to add, "And an absence of any teaching or direction, you know, teaching values, and a failure to fill some basic emotional requirements having to do with feeling strong and adequate." Here he connects unmet emotional needs to inadequacy.

All five respondents spoke to a lack of internal controls as an important factor seen in their clients. Al listed premature sexualization as a cause and noted the compulsive quality of the sex play he has seen in some of the children he has worked with:

I think where you have to look is at kids' sex play. Say if the play is between two five year olds who are doing a sexual exploration that's fine. Where the
confusion takes place is with kids who are basically the same age but their play has a much more persistent and compulsive aspect to it.

Bill links lack of internal control and immaturity with alcoholism and poverty. He said:

You know the extraordinary, impulsive violence that goes on in sexual offending; this is a highly immature person who is out of control, and he is the product of many things, but most often I see alcoholism and poverty.

Carl also spoke to the issue of impulse control. He noted that many of the children he works with have not internalized a sense of control and come from very deprived back grounds where their needs have not been met. Unlike Bill he does not see this so much as an issue of socio-economic status. He commented that:

That whole area of impulse control comes from childhood experiences; to control your impulses as a two year old or a one year old there is a developmental stage there where you learn boundaries from your parents... A lot of kids we are finding don't have that experience, they have no impulse control generally. They haven't
learned about boundaries. A lot of the kids I work with come from very deprived back grounds where they are very needy... But here we are sitting in a nice suburban community and if I were to say which families the offenders come from, you would be surprised because you meet some really nice suburban families, middle class families, and everything seems perfect but their child has offended.

Doug listed a number of factors which he perceived as contributing to the development of an offending pattern of behavior, including, "lack of appropriate (sexual) information, low self-esteem for a number of reasons, and they may not have anything to do with sexuality per-say, a lack of a sense of personal power, and religious attitudes that fail to prepare people for sexual experiences."

Ed thought that fundamentalist religions held out some hope to offenders, and offered the opinion that sex offenders might be drawn to those religions rather than those religions creating offenders. He thought the offender was looking for an external control to replace his lack of internal control and said:
There has been all this stuff about fundamentalist people tending to offend a lot, and I see what that is looking for strong external controls that can stop them from acting out. I think a lot of that is - look for something strong out there - keep me in line - don't let me get myself in trouble. I don't think it is ever articulated in those words but I think that is what they are looking for. It is knowing that they are vulnerable, that they need some kind of external controls but not knowing how to get them, so they seek a very strong and rigid system to put themselves in and hope that will stop them.

Here we see two viewpoints on a perceived interaction between a cultural institution, fundamentalist religion, and individual factors. One view perceives religion as discouraging open discussion about sexuality, which contributes to social isolation and lack of preparedness. The other view perceives the offender attracted by the rigidity and control which he lacks himself.

There was a degree of consensus that psychological deficits commonly noted in sex offenders developed over time, and with these handicaps the sex offender was seen as
lacking the social skills necessary to negotiate the ups and downs of an intimate relationship.

Al, for example, believes that the offender employs a number of strategies which lower the child's sense of self worth and result in the child developing a dependency on the offender. This respondent begins with the assumption that the vast majority of offenders were previously victimized. In his practice he has noted that offenders abused as boys by adult males often end up questioning their sexual identity. This confusion interferes with their ability to relate in a non-controlling way with same age peers. He said:

What I have come across in my practice, in the past, is that sex offenders, if they have an ongoing relationship with the children they are offending, have a number of mechanisms and strategies they use to prevent the development of self worth in their victims. They tend to create a kind of dependency which makes it easier to continue abusing their victims... It is certainly an attempt to control, and control is certainly as much a factor in sexual abuse as the sexual sensations they get from offending. I have
frequently come across offenders who, in childhood, were molested by men or teenagers who question their identity, but on the basis that there must be something female about me, or I must be gay or this older man wouldn't find me sexually attractive. Their sexual identity becomes defined by the activity.

This respondent believes that sexual abuse often results in a sexual identity crisis for the victim who is also suffering from lowered self worth. This combination can result in the person struggling with his sexual orientation which may interfere with his ability to form mutually respectful and non-controlling relationships with age appropriate people.

When speaking to the issue of social skills Bill returned to the theme of inadequacy, and, in particular, the social skills needed to establish and maintain adult relationships. He said:

...inadequacy in the opposite sex generally. I think people under-estimate how hard it is to be heterosexual, to be in the heterosexual rat race. It takes an extraordinary sophistication of strengths, talents and skills to ask someone for a date.
Although Bill refers to heterosexual skills and the heterosexual rat race it must be emphasized that the issue is not about whether one's orientation is to opposite or same sex partners but rather whether one's orientation includes children as sexual partners.

Ed also identified social skills as an important issue for offenders to address. He described a group process he uses to identify social and life skills that need to be addressed:

I think there are a whole lot of social skills deficits, and I really focus on the social skills/life skills kind of stuff in terms of sex offending. What I tend to do when working with group of sex offenders is I'll have each person in the group discuss their life and their offense and as they do that I will list the issues that come up like cold distant father, drinking problem, being sexually abused, unhappy marriage, anger; whatever kinds of things in just a few words so that we end up with 20, 50, 60 kinds of things which have come up from them talking about their life and their offending.
Ed's work especially in group with offenders focuses on identifying social and life skill deficits that he believes contribute to the offenders pattern of behavior. By addressing these deficits he believes that offenders are more likely to engage in appropriate peer relationships.

In this section individual characteristics were identified and discussed by the respondents. Each respondent was guided by his own theoretical perspective and perception of sex offenders; this resulted in a wide variety of characteristics being identified. It is also interesting to note that where there was agreement about which factors were important, the respondents often offered unique interpretations of how those factors originated or how they contribute to the development of an offending pattern of behavior. These characteristics were perceived by the respondents as emanating from the childhood experiences that their clients had. These characteristics were not presented as discreet units but were seen as important factors in understanding the deficits that offenders face as children.
Family Environmental Factors

The respondents described the family environment of sex offenders and their childhood experiences in fairly depressing terms. On the whole these experiences could be characterized as abusive, neglectful, confusing and certainly not conducive to the development of healthy individuals capable of negotiating their needs in respectful and appropriate ways. The degree of therapist agreement and their perceptions are found in Table 3 on the following page.
Table 3

Male Therapists' Perceptions of the Family Environment and the Childhood Experiences of Male Sex Offenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Environmental Experiences</th>
<th>Al</th>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>Doug</th>
<th>Ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sexual abuse</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence/neglect</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor personal boundaries</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inadvertent sexualizing experiences</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents unable to handle child's expression of sexuality</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of caring role model</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More agreement was expressed by the respondents about the childhood experiences offenders were likely to have had in their families of origin. All five identified child sexual abuse in the backgrounds of their clients. They thought that as young children sex offenders were exposed to poor role models who failed to instill positive boundaries, and thus were confused about right and wrong. Family violence was a factor mentioned by four respondents. Parents inability to react appropriately to their children's expressions of sexuality was also identified as an important factor in emotionally overloading the child. Most respondents expressed the opinion that this dynamic most often occurs in cases where the parents have unresolved trauma from their own abuse.

Al reported that he had kept records of boys referred to him because they had been sexually abused. He perceives a strong link between prior sexual abuse and subsequent offending, and said:

I found that even after the disclosure of being sexually abused that about 30% of them had turned to molesting other children or acting out sexually in some way in relation to other children.
He believed this indicated how powerful the original abuse experience was in shaping their lives, and the difficulty of resolving those experiences.

When discussing why offenders commit sex crimes, Bill reported, "The first thing I would think of is sexual abuse in childhood, and I see that in maybe 40% of the people I work with. I have read 50% but my own personal experience would be somewhere there (around 40%)."

From a learning perspective, Carl, described the link between sexual victimization and offending in this way:

There are a lot of children who have learned a lot of adult sexual behavior through their own abuse. They take that learning and use it on children their own age and so, for example, you find four year old kids doing oral sex with each other and, of course, that is not the sort of thing four year olds normally do.

Doug also sees previous sexual abuse in the backgrounds of the offenders he has worked with. This respondent also works with male survivors of sexual abuse and makes the point that because many of them have not offended we really do not have all the answers about how sex offenders get started. He notes:
One thing I know about sex offending, and am quite convinced about, is we don't really know what is going on because the sex offenders we know about are the ones that get into the judicial system. We don't know about all the ones who don't get into the system. Is there a difference? So I think that I probably would go along with the commonly held belief that most offenders were sexually abused as kids. That doesn't explain it (offending) because the majority of survivors don't go on to offend, and what is that all about? I think there is still a lot to be learned.

In offering a rough estimate this respondent thought that about 75% of the offenders he worked with had disclosed a prior history of being sexually abused. This comparatively high estimate reflects the definition used at his counselling agency. He argues:

A lot of people don't recognize a lot of behaviors as sexually abusive. With the definition we use here we talk about sexuality abuse which not only includes traditional sexual abuse but a lot of other things that undermine the persons sense of their sexual self. Sexual comments or parents not being careful about
their love making so that their children are likely to witness it, fathers showing their sons pornography when they are too young or leaving it around where they can get at it. All these things are sexually abusive but most people don't see them as such, and so when you ask, 'Have you ever been sexually abused, they think rape, and say, 'No'.

Doug states that about half of the offenders report in the beginning phase, with the rest coming during the middle phase and early closing stage of the work.

Ed thought that many of the offenders he works with have been sexually abused as children, but pointed out that disclosure of prior sexual abuse differs according to whether the offender is in group or individual session. He says:

I think that beginning, if you are talking the first three to five sessions in individual work, I think most (offenders who have been sexually abused as children), 80% to 90% probably. In group work I think it is a bit more difficult for people to talk about being victims. I think they (disclosures) are more likely to occur in the middle and end phases of work.
That is only because I think it is easier, well, males find it hard to talk about being victims of sexual abuse anyway, and on a one to one they find it a bit easier to talk about it.

Ed went on to describe a disclosure in group where an offender told a story of being picked up and driven to the woods where he was beaten up and sexually assaulted. At the next session his story changed; he was picked up and driven to the woods but not beaten up. He told the group that although he did not really understand what was happening he kind of liked it. Ed perceives that disclosures in group are more likely to be distorted, as the men attempt to present themselves as in control of the situation or, conversely, completely overpowered.

Sex offenders were described as coming from homes characterized by neglect and violence, which they either witnessed or were victims of. When asked what other factors might play a role in the development of a sex offending pattern of behavior aside from sexual abuse, Al stated, "a childhood background of emotional deprivation or emotional abuse or physical abuse".
Bill, when asked to describe any parenting patterns he thought were significant, distinguished between the parenting rapists received from what he perceived pedophiles receiving. Describing the parenting rapists received, he replied, "You know, neglectful and abusive, and I would say almost hostile to the child, the kid is just a nuisance". He described pedophiles as:

Tremendously shy; some of them have had a very hard militaristic father who kind of beat the initiative out of them. The kind of initiative that you need to make a healthy heterosexual overture to an appropriate partner. That initiative has been so beaten out of them by very obsessional and regimental type fathers that this is their regressive infantile substitute, to offend against children.

It should be noted that the issue is not whether a heterosexual orientation is healthy and by implication that a homosexual orientation is not. The more important point Bill makes is that a particular parenting style by fathers may interfere with their sons ability to show initiative in developing mutually respectful relations with peers.
Carl also saw family violence as a common experience with the children he works with. He said, "Many of the kids I work with have parents where the father is battering (mother) and they (the children) are taking positions where they are aggressive, sometimes sexually".

Doug related a story told by one of his clients that illustrates the link between family violence and sex offending:

Someone described to me his father coming home drunk - coming home drunk and raping his mother, and it was horrible, the impact on this kid. At that point, he had not been sexually abused, but that event had as heavy an impact as his own abuse. He was gang raped by his brother's friends later on, but seeing his father come home and sexually and physically abuse his mother was very disturbing. Now he is not an offender in one sense, but he is gay and has acted out in a number of ways, and it's mutually abusive a number of the situations he has been in. He has had sexual experiences with younger men who were probably old enough so that it was legal but too young to really understand what was going on. Him being an older
person was able to give them some attention, and all the stuff that offenders do.

All of the respondents described experiences that inadvertently sexualized the child. This premature sexualization was often described as impacting negatively on the development of healthy boundaries. These incidents may be quite subtle or very obvious as the examples below will demonstrate.

Ali talked about what can happen in a group of children when a playmate introduces their abuse experience into the group. We had been discussing the boundary between normal sexual curiosity and sexual abuse among children. He said:

So this is where the whole thing gets pretty murky. Are they exhibiting normal curiosity or are they showing signs of secondary abuse? And then you have the situation where sexual behavior in a group of kids tends to expand and the parents get this horrible feeling that the world is going crazy and that they (the children) are all going to develop into sex maniacs.

In this example the children were prematurely sexualized when one child introduced some behavior into the group that
was not age appropriate. As the behavior grew it came to the attention and concern of these children's' parents who sought help to curb the behavior.

Bill perceives sex offenders as largely inadequate. He perceives them as coming from homes that are non-supportive, where parents are too embarrassed to teach healthy attitudes about sex. He likens offenders' lack of knowledge about sexuality to, "a big blank canvass in that area, for many of them growing up, which doesn't help at all - the whole subject (of sexuality) is mystified."

For this respondent it isn't so much a case of what happened to distort healthy boundaries as it is a case of those boundaries not having been established in the first place. Later in the interview he volunteered the opinion that since education on healthy sexuality is often not taught at home it behooves society to provide it in the schools.

Carl, because he has more contact with the families of the children he works with, also had more to say on this issue. He notes that for the children he sees sexual abuse has a very negative impact on boundaries, "... they (sexually intrusive children) are acting out similar kinds
of things. "They need to have those boundaries back, to learn what is OK and not OK." In discussing the line between what is or isn't OK he says, "Their boundaries are so screwed up that what is OK falls into both areas." Another way in which this respondent sees children becoming prematurely sexualized is through exposure to X-rated magazines and videos; "It happens a lot - the X-rated video that the parents never thought the kid would find, and the kid will see it and try to copy it." Carl identified another aspect of premature sexualization, "I have seen families that are very sexualized, where there are poor boundaries, where sexual behavior is quite common and the children have that character about them."

Carl also identified intergenerational abuse and unresolved trauma in one or both parents as impeding the growth of healthy boundaries. He said:

You see families where there is intergenerational abuse and the whole area of sexuality is so loaded in the family, they (the parents) can't deal with their kids normal experiences of sexuality, and it becomes an area where there is a lot of trauma around.
Carl perceives the development of healthy boundaries around the area of sexuality as very important. In the examples above he describes a number of family environmental situations in which those boundaries do not develop in a healthy way.

Earlier in this section, Doug described types of experiences which he feels can prematurely sexualize a child. Below he describes how a lack of information coupled with a developmentally inappropriate experience can lead to the formation of a misconception that can derail a child's healthy sexual development. His perception on this process is influenced by a social learning perspective. He stated:

Powerful images stay in a kid's mind, and when he wakes to his own sexuality that image is drawn upon to guide our sexuality. Children who witness anothers abuse are emotionally abused and they are sexually abused. If you see a pornographic image you attach to that image and that image stays in your mind - that image becomes your role model.

Doug is beginning to describe the interplay between family environment and unhealthy attitudes and notes that those
attitudes are often modeled covertly, so that what is missing is:

...the accurate information and healthy attitudes from adults in the child's life. We model ourselves from our parents, or our parent figure, and if parents are doing this leering, skulking kind of sexuality like some kind of trashy magazine brand of sexuality, or if it is like sex is wrong and sinful and don't talk about it, don't say those words. At either extreme, kids are not getting healthy attitudes about sex. They are not given the opportunity to look within themselves and see what kinds of responses and feelings they have, and to be open and have a dialogue about that. You know like, "something happened today and this is how I felt, I found it kind of confusing," and then to be able to sit down and explore that with a loving parent - these kids don't have that. They grow up not knowing what's right, what's wrong, what's kinky, what's sin, and what's virtue. They don't know all that stuff.

Ed, on this topic, pointed out that healthy boundaries around sexuality are missing for the offenders he works with. Like some of the other respondents he perceives that
the failure to develop healthy boundaries can often result when the parent fails to encourage healthy communication about sexuality. He says:

If one is embarrassed, guilty, and inhibited about having sexual feelings and acting out sexually, then that can really stop ones growth and exploration and development and understanding of those sexual feelings. Whereas, if sex and guilt end up becoming associated with one another a lot, then that doesn't make for a whole lot of healthy exploration of these sexual feelings. The guilt comes from early experiences as kids and could be anywhere from the way they are talked to or treated at home, or at school about any kind of sexual stuff. If it's, "we don't talk about that or don't touch yourself there, don't say those words," and probably even a lot of non-verbal stuff around sex can teach people that it is bad to have sexual feelings. You shouldn't think that way, you shouldn't feel that way, you can't talk about it.

Ed views guilt and shame as the stumbling blocks to developing healthy attitudes and boundaries around one's sexuality. He also believes these feelings playing a part
in intergenerational abuse, and why sexuality becomes so loaded for parents who were abused as children.

In summary, all five therapists raised the issue of lack of a caring role model. Al, as mentioned earlier, believes sex offenders engage in a sort of self-parenting where they construct a nurturing fantasy that serves as a rationale for their offending, and from which they draw the sense of acceptance they did not receive from parents.

Bill characterizes rapists as not having anyone "giving a damn" and "being left on their own to discover whatever they might." He describes pedophiles as coming from homes dominated by fathers who stifled their son's effort to develop initiative and a positive sense of their masculinity.

Carl emphasized the importance of healthy boundaries which help children differentiate between right and wrong. He believes that children begin to learn those boundaries at a very early age from the parental models they have available. Based on his experience with sexually intrusive children and their families, Carl describes a number of ways in which the boundaries around sexuality are not functioning effectively.
Doug believes that sexual abuse is too narrow a focus and argues that we should become cognizant of the more subtle ways healthy sexuality can be undermined. He believes that exposure to sexual violence in the home is as traumatic as being abused directly. In this sense he ascribes to a learning model similar to the one described in Chapter 2. In this regard, he stressed the notion that attitudes too are learned and modeled at home.

Ed developed the theme of social feedback and communication, which he perceives as largely lacking in the sex offenders he works with. He feels that significant others in the child's background are largely responsible for creating communication breakdowns through the transmission of guilt and shame. He emphasized that projecting negative attitudes about one's sexuality can be done quite subtly.

Overall the respondents saw their clients growing up in families unable to provide the warmth and caring atmosphere likely to produce assertive and self-reliant children. Instead sex offenders grow up in families characterized by sexual abuse, family violence, and neglect. The models they have to draw upon for what it is to be a man are often domineering and abusive. Consequently the messages they
receive about what is right and what is wrong are often at odds with social mores and consequently confusing.

**Cultural Factors**

This section explores the thoughts expressed by the respondents that supported cultural explanations of sex offending behavior. As Table 4, found on page 163, indicates all five respondents mentioned that offenders did not receive age appropriate sex education, and that males are socialized to use power and control to meet their needs. Four of the five respondents mentioned that sexual abuse is a cultural phenomenon. Beyond those three areas, psychologists with Ph.D.'s did not speak to the ways culture influences sex offenders.
Table 4

Cultural Factors Perceived by Male Therapists as Impacting the Childhood Experience of Male Sex Offenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Factors</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>males socialized to:</td>
<td>Al  Bill  Carl  Doug  Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use power and control to meet their needs</td>
<td>X  X  X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be attracted to less powerful females</td>
<td>X  X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiate sexual contact</td>
<td>X  X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexual exploitation by the media.</td>
<td>X  X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pornography</td>
<td>X  X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse as a cultural phenomenon</td>
<td>X  X  X  X  X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age appropriate sex education lacking</td>
<td>X  X  X  X  X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again we see a possible educational bias developing, with psychologists with Ph.D.'s mentioning socialization and cultural influences less frequently than those respondents with Master's degrees. Another possible explanation is that these respondents work almost entirely with sex offenders entering prison or newly released from prison, while the other respondents work with non-incarcerated sex offenders.

Al, when talking about blocks to disclosure, expressed the opinion that males experience sexual abuse as a loss of power and control. He stated:

I think there is a factor that has to do with control and power. It may be easier for the sex offender to admit what he has done to children than to admit that someone has had control over him. In their minds it may be more socially acceptable to be the perpetrator than to be the victim.

Al perceives that the socialization of males to power and control was influenced by age and status. He said, "I find it (attitudes about power and control) to be true with older men when they become more entrenched in societal value patterns." In relation to status he stated, "The character I had the most difficult time getting at his own
victimization was a successful business executive. He didn't want to see himself as a victim."

Bill also saw power as a primary factor behind sex offenses, saying:

Sexual offending is not really about sexual gratification; if you are talking about rape you are most often seeing power and anger motives, and if you are talking about pedophilia you are looking to what often amounts to the man regressing to seeking partners his own age.

Bill perceives the rapist through aggression, and the pedophile through cunning, as using power and control to meet needs they cannot meet in appropriate ways. These needs are essentially to do with self-esteem and the need to feel accepted.

Carl also identifies power and control as an issue for sexually intrusive children. He stated:

For a lot of the kids there is a power connection, and in this counselling program I see a lot more of the boys that are starting to offend than the counselors working with the girls. I think there are some social things for boys in terms of feeling the victim when
they were younger, then when they deal with that they express a lot more anger and the way they deal with that (anger), is rather than be on the victim side they come in on the offender side, and sort of enjoy that position of having power over other people. There is a social thing too; we live in a society that endorses power over others.

Carl articulates the connection between anger and power, and points out that children learn about the uses of power from their individual abuse experience and from the socializing messages that endorse power in society.

Doug, like some of the others, saw the socializing message about power and control as blocking disclosure, and to the extent that those myths are internalized impeding therapy. He said:

The whole masculinity issue - "real men don't get sexually abused,"- so goes the myth. Homophobia - a lot of survivors believe that if they admit to being sexually abused they are admitting to being homosexual because they have been abused by a male, and they somehow feel responsible; it (the abuse) somehow says something about them.
Doug perceives that the loss of control, experienced as a result of sexual abuse, may create the kind of sexual identity crisis described by Al in a previous section. Doug also perceives that homophobia, existing at a cultural level, intensifies the need in male survivors to be even more macho.

Ed expressed the view that males have a difficult time admitting that they were the victim and tend to distort past abuse experiences. He stated, "Males have a difficult time talking about being sexually abused and distort the experience to put themselves in control." Similarly, he thinks the need for power and control, lacking in offenders, is an important motivating factor, and says:

I really believe that sex offending is not about sexual gratification. There are different reasons why people offend, but a lot of it is about that whole thing of having power and control.

Three of the respondents perceive that men are socialized to be attracted to less powerful females, and to view themselves as more powerful than females. One of the ways men are socialized in the use of power is to initiate sexual contact. In exploring this issue, two of the
respondents brought up situations where boys have been sexually abused by girls and discussed that dynamic as well.

Al mentioned earlier that, "... one factor is the cultural expectation that adult males are permitted or even expected to act out sexually against less powerful females."

In questioning whether some offenders come to redefine childhood experiences from benign to abusive Al replied:

Certainly that is a fairly common phenomenon. It is much more common where the offender is female; then they, the men, put a twist on that and more commonly it's defined as opportunity. You see, it is hard. If you are a boy victimized by a male you may not want to admit that another male has had power over you. Once you get through the power issue, boys will admit having been abused by males, particularly when they get in touch with their anger about the abuse; but they are very reluctant to, in many cases, admit that a girl has molested them.

This respondent believes that sexual abuse by females strikes at the victim's sense of power in a different way than when men are the offenders, so that "...in their
fantasy surrounding the molestation they're the one in power. It might be a teenage baby-sitter and the boy might be eight years old but he will still define himself as the one in control". He went on to say that, "the fearful parts of that, the abusive parts of that, they often bury quite successfully. It is very hard to get them to admit that they felt cornered or frightened or compromised in any way".

Carl described his perception of this phenomenon in this way:

I have worked with some of those boys, and they come in with a societal image of the experience, you know, "Wasn't I lucky." But when you get to know them and they let it down a bit, it is like, "Oh my God what was that all about, I didn't have any control. I didn't want this to happen." So their own experience, I think, was abuse.

The above two descriptions illustrate the strength of socialization as it relates to male and female sexual roles. Boys are socialized from a very early age to take charge and be in control of females. When those roles are reversed, it would seem that boys re-frame their experience to conform
with the cultural expectations that they are powerful, in control, and the ones to initiate sexual contacts.

Carl also expressed the opinion that the attitudes that are modeled, especially by fathers but also by the media influence sexual aggression in children. He noted:

I think a lot of the social attitudes really encourage males to be more aggressive, and in terms of sexuality to be the person taking the aggressive position. The modeling of how a male acts - he takes power, takes advantage of people, overpowers people, and takes what he wants. ... and look at the media, pornography, our art and culture in general terms of how they portray men in their relationships with women.

Doug also perceived cultural attitudes that influence sex offending behavior. He thought it important to consider the developmental stage of the child because that will affect his ability to bring a healthy perspective to the messages he receives. When asked what he thought contributed to the development of sex offending behavior replied:

Unhealthy attitudes coming from our culture.
Well, TV is responsible for a lot of it (sexual offending - media, information - using sex to sell everything, including prime time television programs. As well, this respondent identified dogmatic religions which foster beliefs that discourage open discussions of sexuality. These cultural institutions, by failing to discuss healthy sexuality create the impression that expressions of sexuality are wrong. He states:

Religions don't always help either. A lot of religions are very dogmatic and narrow minded about sexuality. I mean, if you're Catholic and masturbate you'll go to hell for sure. They don't talk about healthy attitudes; they just talk about sex being sinful, and promote religious attitudes that won't explore the question of sexuality at all.

These same three respondents felt that pornography was an influencing factor. They see pornography as a part of our culture, and say their clients report having been exposed to it. They ascribe to the belief that exposure to pornography in childhood is especially problematic.

Al, when asked to describe the early childhood sexual development of the offenders he has worked with, said:
"There seem to be three factors: early childhood sexual abuse, sexual involvement with peers, and exposure to pornography".

Carl has been quoted earlier in this section, and in the previous section on how pornography effects children. His argument, from a social learning perspective, suggests that children who view pornographic material are likely to introduce that image into play with other children. This perception is shared by Doug.

Doug spoke forcefully to the issue of pornography, which he considered an extremely influential factor. He pointed out that often children are exposed to pornography by, "Fathers showing their sons pornography when they are too young, or leaving it around where they can get at it". When children are exposed to pornographic material, Doug believes, it creates a mental image that the child will develop and then use to guide his own behavior. He begins by describing the process, and then provides a case example to illustrate the damage that early exposure to pornography can result in. He says:

If you show a five year old a book on bondage, he will assume that is what adult sexuality is all about. That
image will be really powerful and stay in his mind. He will start playing that out in his own sexual fantasy's as he wakes up to his own sexuality. And then he will try to initiate that kind of behavior because he assumes that is what sexuality is all about.

By way of illustration he provided the following case example:

I was talking to someone who was about seven years old when he came across some Penthouse magazines belonging to his father. He remembered reading the letters, and in particular one letter in which the person was describing how incest is a big thing in his family, and how he and his wife and his kids were all doing it to each other; and they do this, and they do that, and it was written like this was some great and exciting thing. He was getting all charged up and having biological responses to the whole thing, and because it was written in a magazine he assumed that was what families do. So he told me that he had tried doing it to his sister, and did get involved in some sexual stuff with her for quite a long time – until high school age. He tried coming on to his mother. He
didn't tell me what he had done, but she simply wasn't responsive. But you see that was not another person doing something to him - that was exposure to sexual material before he was old enough to know there was such a thing as incest, and that it was not socially acceptable - although in our culture the taboo seems more directed to talking about it rather than doing it.

Doug articulates a process by which exposure to pornography may affect a young child's sexual development. But, like all the other factors identified, this does not operate in isolation.

All five respondents saw a lack of information as a key factor in promoting and maintaining unhealthy sexual attitudes. As with most factors, there is some overlap between what children see modeled in their family environment and what they learn from the broader culture. This seems reasonable given that, as children, the parents of offenders were also inoculated with cultural beliefs. They may then pass along beliefs that are not always helpful.

Al, throughout the interview, spoke to the learning that offenders experience through their own victimization.
He believes that in many cases a child has introduced his own abuse experience into his peer group. It is important to educate children about acceptable and unacceptable behavior. He described a situation where he was called into a local school to address inappropriate sexual behavior among a group of children. He said:

"It is a situation where an adult can step in and say, look you guys this is not a correct way to behave. I ran into a situation like that in a school where I had a special assignment. There was a lot of sexual acting out within a peer group in the school, traced back to an alleged offender in one of the families of one of the kids (in the peer group). When the parents and teachers began flagging the children's behavior, that ripple effect really died down and it's not a problem this year.

Al, working in concert with parents and teachers was able to re-establish healthy sexual boundaries within a peer group that had begun acting out sexually. Part of that process involved education, so that they could once again distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior."
Bill developed a theme shared by others that sex offenders are ill prepared to negotiate life's ups and downs. When talking about the things society could do to make a difference he said, "If anything, maybe just more sexual education".

Carl expressed a similar perception. He also believes that the experience of being sexually abused results in confusion between what is OK and not OK. He said:

...the messages they (children) get about what is OK and what is not OK really vary from one family to another and from one social group to another, and those factors certainly affect the reasons one chooses to do those sorts of things and the development of sexuality. For a lot of them, they have been victims and they have really bad boundaries and so they are acting out similar kinds of things. They need to have those boundaries back and to learn what is OK and not OK. When it comes to working with children, Carl recommends: taking the (victim and offender) labels off. We need to look at how children develop, what they learn and how they experience things, and how they make decisions about what is O.K. and not O.K.
Doug stressed the lack of preparation; a theme also supported by Bill; and like Bill, he thinks a lack of information can result in the development of misconceptions which may be problematic. He says:

It is more what they are all lacking and what they are all lacking healthy attitudes, information and role modeling. Lack of information, when kids don't have the information they need to understand their own sexual development and their own physiology that adds to it and they form misconceptions. Lack of preparedness, a lack of their own sexual maturity. If a male feels, 'Gee, I can't ask a woman out, I don't know how to ask a woman out, they're not going to be interested in me', they are basically a child in their own psycho-sexual development. And so what are they going to do? They are going to get into childhood sex play because that is where they stopped.

Doug argues that healthy sexual attitudes are missing, and that for some people this lack of preparation results in the development of unhealthy beliefs about sexuality. At a cultural level he identifies churches which encourage the belief that sexuality is sinful.
Ed talked about his surprise when he started this work at how little the offenders knew about sex. He says, "Sex offenders are very uncomfortable talking about sex, even asking some offenders, 'How many partners have you had in your life?' is really difficult for many people to answer".

He believes that sex offenders, because they live in a secret world isolated from appropriate feedback, learn very little about normal sexuality.

To a greater or lesser degree all the respondents described sex offending as a cultural phenomenon. Over the course of this report we see this view expressed in a variety of ways. Al, for example, pointed out that the sexual misuse of children is as old as recorded history. As well, in discussing the line between normal sex play and offending behavior among children, he stated:

Well, the line is hazy because we know kids are developing younger, and the sexual culture they are exposed to, more sexual activity. But I don't think we should use our haziness as a cop out - if it looks like offending, let's get at it.

Bill talked of the isolation and over-riding sense of inadequacy he sees in offenders. He suggests that part of
that isolation is classist. He believes that many of the men
he works with grew up in families lacking in resources, and
that as a result did not have the resources available to
others. He says:

I mean who are we - we are middle class professionals.
Where do we draw the line, what are we trying to do
cure them of poverty, cure them of illiteracy? You
know I talk about a failure of imagination, well
imagination has a lot to do with what you're shown,
with what you're modeled. Well, you know if you grow
up in a slum not many things are modeled, not many
books are read, and not many movies are seen.

From this perspective Bill went on to question whether in
offering treatment we were failing to address the causes
and, as a society failing, to do enough. "... but to what
extent are we pouring resources into a leaky bucket, and OK
perhaps it will always be there but that is such a huge
over-arching umbrella, social class and economics." For
this respondent poverty and lack of opportunity go hand in
hand, and children growing up in poverty are, if not more
likely to commit an offense, at least more likely to be
jailed for their criminal behavior.
Carl has outlined a number of ways in which culture plays a part in contributing to sex offending. He also suggests that definitions of sex offending have changed over the years, and that is another way in which culture impacts sexual abuse. He notes:

I can look back fifteen years ago when I was in child protection, and when we came into contact with adolescent sex offenders we assumed they had poor social skills and couldn't relate with their peers, but that they had a normal developing curiosity about sex. They acted that out with kids because they couldn't relate with people their own age. So we had child care workers help them with their social skills and never asked them about their backgrounds. At that point I never considered that boys were sexually abused, so my framework has changed a lot over the years. I guess I gradually assumed that sexual abuse happened to boys, and then looking at offending recognized that offending starts at a younger age too.

This respondent notes how cultural expectations play a role in defining what sexual abuse is and who the victims and perpetrators are.
Doug has moved beyond the classic definition of sexual abuse and argues that a broader definition, which encompasses not only the overt acts defined by law but the covert acts which advertently or inadvertently undermine a child's sense of his own sexual identity be used. His wider definition of sexual abuse would suggest that sexual abuse is even more firmly rooted in our culture than thought. He argues, as well, that churches, an important cultural institution for many people, promote unhealthy rather than healthy sexual attitudes.

Like the others, Ed addressed the role culture plays in defining sexual abuse. He believes that at this point society has made sex offenders more sinister than what they are. He states:

A lot of abnormal behavior isn't that much different than what goes on already, it is just that society has come up with a definition of what is normal and what is not. I often talk to offenders about that I am not here judging whether it is right or wrong to have sex with kids; our society has decided that it is wrong. To me it's not a moral question, it is the law of our society. You (the offender) have to make your own
decision about what is right and wrong and to control your own behavior.

Ed acknowledges that his is a radical position. He believes, however, that it serves a useful purpose. He perceives that the difference between male survivors who go on to offend and those who do not is the latter's ability to talk openly about their sexuality. Offenders, he notes, have a difficult time talking about their sexuality and that guilt and shame influence their silence. By removing the question of morality he believes offenders can move beyond the guilt and shame to discuss their behavior more openly.

As pointed out by some of the other respondents, the line between normal and abnormal is a cultural phenomenon and those definitions are not static. However, addressing the question of sexual abuse from a purely legalistic perspective without addressing the moral issue of right and wrong runs the risk of ignoring the tremendous harm this behavior visits upon its victims. It also runs the risk of allowing offenders to hide behind the rationalization that no wrong is done if one escapes detection.

This section presented the Respondent's perceptions on cultural factors which influence sex offending behavior.
There was general agreement that men are encouraged to exert power and control over others to meet their needs. These needs were varied, but most respondents discounted that sex offending was motivated by the need for sexual gratification. Offenders were socialized in a variety of ways and through a variety of mediums. The respondents perceived that the differential socialization which exists in our culture gives rise to the structural inequity which promotes beliefs and attitudes which contribute to the development of sex offending behavior. Cultural attitudes such as these run deep and will be difficult to change, rooted as they are in our religious, economic, legal and social systems.

**Evolutionary Theme**

Each of the respondents talked of becoming a sex offender as opposed to being a sex offender. Childhood experiences were seen as playing a major role in this process. Although universal agreement was lacking in regards to what these experiences were, as described in the preceding sections, they did envision them as existing at an individual, family and cultural level.
Al, when describing his theory on sex offending, first put the sexual abuse of children by adults within a historical context. At an individual level he believes that the majority of offenders were abused themselves. For him the process has both an inter-generational component, and a cultural component. He also sees the clients self worth as an important aspect, and says:

If you look at it historically, sexual offending is as old as mankind, or as far as we know. If you go back to ancient Greece you find that boys were considered fair game as sexual objects; I don't know if they thought of that as sexual offending. Sexual activity with boys was looked upon as pleasurable by the adult. We don't know; there are no historical records which describe how the boys perceived it, whether they enjoyed it or not. We do know that sexual behavior between adults and kids goes back a long way, and we do know that it is generational, that it tends to occur in families where the adults were sexually abused as children.

Al ascribes significance to the fact that throughout history children have been used by adults for their sexual pleasure, and emphasized the intergenerational quality
prevalent in the literature. He also emphasized that cultural expectations contribute too. He stated:

I think one factor is sexual abuse and I think another factor is the cultural expectation that adult males are permitted, or even expected, to act out sexually against less powerful females. I think there is a basic core of low self-worth, for many offenders, that is very important.

Bill emphasizes the sense of isolation that he has noticed in the offenders he has worked with. He believes, that for sex offenders this sense of being out of step with the world can begin quite early. He notes:

So quite early on, before the age of six, there is an acceptance in the person that, I'm never going to be O.K., I'm never going to be a normal person, I'm always going to have problems, I'm going to have to make up for what I lack in ways that are probably not going to be socially conventional.

Ed also identified social isolation and that sense of being different and outside the norm. He examined this theme from the perspective of social psychology. He believes that a central feature of sex offenders is the fantasies
they create about sex. Because those fantasies are not socially acceptable there is no one they can check them out with. Their sense of being different is heightened by the fantasies they have around sex with children. This increases the guilt and shame they feel, which increases their sense of isolation. The perspective shared by this respondent was informed in part by his own experience of being a homosexual. He emphasized how being gay gave him some insight into, and empathy for the offender. It was his view that homosexuals and sex offenders share the experience of being shunned and shamed because their sexual orientation takes them outside the norms of society. He describes the relationship between fantasies and offender isolation:

I wonder about offenders having a much more difficult time talking about sex, being comfortable with sex and being comfortable about having sexual feelings. I think that is because they have feelings that are not socially acceptable. (He likened that to his own experience of growing up gay and having sexual feelings that were also not socially acceptable). How do we know what is acceptable behavior except for feedback from our environment. Well if you have feelings inside that
you can't express and you can't get the feedback - like smarten up that is out of line, that is not appropriate. Without that, then it is pretty easy to convince yourself about whatever you are doing. So when I think of what is different, (between offenders and non-offenders), not being able to talk about it, not being comfortable with sex, comfortable enough to talk and to get the feedback. I don't remember talking to a sex offender who has ever said, "well yea, I talk about my attraction to, or my interest in, and this is the kind of feedback I get;" it's usually, No I never talk about it, I've never even told myself about it."

Doug emphasized the conscious and unconscious aspects of the process of developing an offending pattern in the pedophile. It should be kept in mind that this refers to only a small percentage of sexual offenders. He believes that child molesters lack positive role modeling from fathers, and their need to be accepted has not been met. They find themselves stuck at a childlike level of sexual development. Here is how he described the process:
A lot of pedophiles play into sexuality, much like a kid would. They are very artful at what they do, but not as premeditated as we might think, given how smooth they are at it. Somehow this has evolved over the years, and I think they are continuing to play out something they have known since childhood. It's hidden, it's secret, "Mom and dad are going to get mad if they find out, we can't tell them about it, this is our little secret, our little game;" and that is the way kids are with sexuality. I think they grow into it, (sex offending) in a progressive way - they evolve into it. It begins in childhood sex play, and continues, and continues, and they never develop an adult sexuality. Then as they become more cognitively developed they come to realize that this is something they enjoy, but it is not socially acceptable, but here is how it works and here is how I can keep it silent, here is how I can keep it hidden. The behavior evolves. The awareness of that behavior comes on and they become more premeditated. They know they are going out looking for someone (to molest) but there is no school for sex offenders except for the
school of life, they don't sit and read about it, and think about it, and decide, "Oh I think I'll become a sex offender, how shall I go about it?" It is an evolutionary thing that they become increasingly aware of as they become increasingly better at it.

Carl expressed a slightly different orientation, possibly because he works exclusively with children and was the only social worker interviewed. This respondent, in response to the question asking him to describe his own theory about how sex offending begins, replied that he tries not to have a specific theory. He went on to describe a number of frameworks that fit for the children and youth he sees in his practice. Carl’s description is presented last because it contains elements of those presented earlier. His emphasis on not being tied to a particular theory seems to allow him to incorporate a variety of frameworks. He explained his perception:

I guess one of the things I try not to do is have a specific framework - the field is not very well developed at this point and different offenders begin offending for different reasons. One of my tenets - I work with children who are victims, so I see
offenders - the children and adolescents who are offending have quite often been victimized. I really see a link between their own victimization and then turning it around and becoming an offender, but I don't see that as the only reason that people offend. To me it makes a lot of sense that if someone has been abused they learn that pattern. For some kids I see it as part of their sexual orientation; they get some sexual feelings during the abuse and then when they get older and interested in sexuality they act out similar things. For a lot of kids there is a power connection, and in this counselling program I see a lot more of the boys that are starting to offend than the counselors working with the girls. I think there are some social things for boys in terms of feeling the victim when they were younger, then when they deal with that they express a lot more anger, and the way that they deal with that is rather than be on the victim side they come on the offender side and sort of enjoy that position of having power over other people, and so there is that element in there too. There is a social thing too. We live in a society that endorses power
over others; that is certainly part of it too. However, I work with a fair number of kids where it doesn't fit in terms of that pattern, and the reason they are offending may have to do with pure chance, or whatever. It is harder to understand why they choose a path of offending as part of their sexual development. I think a lot of the social attitudes really encourage males to be more aggressive, and in terms of sexuality to be the person taking the aggressive position. With some kids I see those attitudes modeled in families, the male dominance, and in terms of family violence in general, just the modeling of how a male acts - he takes power, takes advantage of people, overpowers people, takes what he wants. If you look at media, pornography, our art and culture in general in terms of how they portray men in their relationships with women. When I see kids who are ten, eleven, twelve or thirteen and fifteen and the messages they get about what is O.K. and what is not, really vary from one family to another and from one social group to another, and those factors certainly affect the reasons one chooses to do those sorts of things and the development of sexuality. I
guess one of the other things I have found working in the field that is sort of interesting on the power side of it is the connection between family violence and battering. Many of the kids I work with have parents where the father is battering, and then they are taking positions where they are aggressive, sometimes sexually, and developing an offender framework. You do see those connections in the field for sure. There is a whole other side of the research which takes a behaviorist perspective. I went to a workshop recently given by a therapist from Seattle who takes a straight behaviorist approach. His point of view, especially with adolescent offenders, is that some of them just seem to have fallen into it. When you think of how sexuality develops, that if you happen to get aroused with certain thoughts you develop patterns and that some kids seem to have just fallen into it (deviant patterns). That kind of fits with some of the cases I have had. You do a whole history and there doesn't seem to be anything there to explain why this kid is offending and that does happen some time. And that is
why it is important to look at a whole range of
theories rather than rely on just one.

The evolutionary process described to varying degrees
by all respondents demonstrates that clearly this process
begins in childhood. This over-riding theme is supported by
the data in this section, and by the data presented in the
preceding sections. As well, each of the respondents share
certain perceptions with one another while emphasizing
particular aspects of the process which they perceive as
important.

Al one points to the intergenerational aspect of abuse
and emphasizes that sexual abuse of children is a part of
our historical record. Differential socialization is also
mentioned as a factor in the process. Boys are expected to
be aggressive while girls are encouraged to be passive.
Finally, he believes that self esteem is an important issue
for offenders.

Bill perceives the process as beginning early, with the
child's sense that he just does not fit in and will not have
his needs met by others. Ed expanded on the theme of
isolation. From a social psychological perspective, he
described the offenders discomfort with sex and especially
with talking about sex as impeding the opportunity for social feedback, which would have allowed the offender to self-correct his behavior before the pattern developed. This sense of being outside the norm sexually, coupled with an inability to talk openly about their feelings, was described as maintaining a sense of isolation which contributes to their offending behavior. Doug described an evolutionary process where the offender's sexual development becomes stuck. An awareness develops in the offender that his sexual orientation is outside the norm of society. This knowledge leads him to develop strategies that allow him to continue to meet his own needs.

Carl has integrated a number of frameworks into his work. He views prior sexual abuse as providing a model for the development of an offending pattern and spoke to how boys are encouraged to take control and exert power to meet their needs. He also noted the importance of premature sexualization and pointed out that physiological responses at the time of the abuse may provide an impetus to repeat the behavior, but as the one in control rather than as the one being controlled. Finally, Carl notes that for many of his clients these explanations do not fit, and wonders
whether there might be an element of chance to how sexuality develops. Carl description suggests that he is developing an ecological framework to hold the variety of frameworks he draws upon in his work.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the data obtained through interviews conducted with the five respondents taking part in this study. Each of the five respondents had perspectives that were unique, but which also contained similar elements. Each respondent viewed childhood experiences as influencing the development of sex offending behavior and thus spoke in terms of a process. Each identified factors at an individual, family environmental, and cultural level as important to our understanding of sexual offending.

The perspective Al presents reflects the fact that he works with both offenders and victims. He emphasized the strong link between being a victim and becoming an offender. He ascribed to an intergenerational model that holds that sexually abusive behavior is transmitted through direct experience. Like most other respondents, Al identified self-esteem as a central issue, but perceived that the poor self-
esteem seen in offenders is most often the result of the coercive manipulations they experienced through their own abuse. To counteract their poor self-esteem and faulty attachments Al described a process of fantasy construction which, in the offender's mind, rationalizes the offense. In short, the offender convinces himself, if only briefly, that the victim enjoys the abuse and indeed welcomes the offender's sexual contact.

Al believes that the family environment is often abusive, neglectful, and that as a child the offender's emotional needs are not met. This lack of being nurtured within the context of family contributes to his vulnerability, making him more likely to become a victim of sexual abuse.

At a cultural level Al emphasized that sexual abuse has been an ongoing theme throughout history. He believes there are many socializing messages that promote sexual abuse, including the expectation that men have the right to use power and control to meet their needs. He also feels that pornography and other misogynist messages promote attitudes which condone sexual abuse.
Only one of the respondents, Bill, works exclusively with offenders. The offenders he works with have been newly released from prison, and attend sessions as a condition of their parole. Since the offenders he works with have all been incarcerated, one might speculate that his clients lack the financial and personal resources capable of keeping them out of jail, and that as a consequence they may represent a more marginalized group of offenders than seen by the other therapists taking part in this study.

Bill's perspective suggests that offenders develop a sense of not fitting in early in childhood, which increases over time, and that the social skills needed to meet their emotional needs within the context of appropriate relationships, never adequately develop. Poor self-esteem, isolation, and inadequacy combine to severely reduce appropriate options for the offenders Bill works with.

Bill believes that offenders come from marginalized families, and that consequently offenders are often abused, neglected and otherwise left to grow up on the streets. He believes that attachment is an issue for all the offenders he works with. Lacking warm and nurturing caretakers has
resulted in a faulty attachment, which impacts their self-esteem and feelings of being accepted.

Carl was the only social worker in this study. He works exclusively with male children and adolescents, who have not been incarcerated because of their age. Like Al, he works with both victims and offenders. Carl perceives sexually abusive behavior as learned behavior, but suggests that children can learn through indirect experiences. In this regard he spoke to the models available to children at home and the socializing effects of society. Unlike Bill, who sees offenders coming from a lower socio-economic class, Carl is more likely to see offenders from middle class homes. Despite this he perceives these children as emotionally deprived and as experiencing abuse and neglect issues in their family of origins. He noted that many of the parents of the children and youth referred to him were sexually abused as children, and notes that sexuality is an emotionally loaded issue for these families. As a result the boundaries are often confused, with children getting far too much or far too little information on sexuality. According to Carl inappropriate modeling around sexuality often occurs in these families as well.
Carl also sees sexual abuse as a cultural problem and that males are socialized to take what they want from others and to meet their needs through the inappropriate use of power and control. These socializing messages are modeled to young children through television and within families. Carl notes that accidental exposure to pornography can result in the pre-sexualization of children.

Doug works exclusively with adult males. Although he began working with incarcerated sex offenders in group sessions, he has moved away from that population and now works with non-incarcerated sex offenders. Although he still works with some offenders, his main focus has shifted to providing services to male survivors of sexual abuse.

Although he supports the victim-offender link, he doesn't think it has as much explanatory power as is often ascribed to it. He notes that most male survivors have not become offenders. Doug ascribes significance to factors in all three categories of experience. He argues that the definition of sexual abuse in use today is too narrow. He believes that, as children, offenders have often had their healthy sexual development undermined in a number of ways, including witnessing sexual violence, exposure to
pornography, parents failing to be discreet with their sexual relationship, and the transmission of unhealthy attitudes about sexuality.

Like the other respondents interviewed, Doug perceives that sex offenders have a number of individual deficits. Faulty attachment, low self-esteem, isolation, and a sense of inadequacy combine to impair the offender's emotional development so that their ability to form meaningful and appropriate relationships is negatively impacted.

Doug also supports the view that offenders are raised in family environments characterized by sexual abuse and other factors which undermine their healthy sexuality. Like Carl, he emphasizes the importance of learning through models, and argues that often what is modeled at home promotes sexual abuse, including men battering and sexually abusing their wives and children. Witnessing another's abuse, according to Doug, is as traumatic as direct experience and provides a powerful image that may act as a guide for future behavior.

At a cultural level, Doug spoke to the notion that males are socialized to meet their needs at the expense of others. He also expressed a strong opinion about the role
played by the media which uses sex as a marketing tool. He believes that children, when exposed to written or visual pornography, develop those images in fantasy, and when their own sexual feelings come to the fore use them as models to guide their behavior.

Ed, who works with male offenders and male survivors, operates from the perspective of social psychology. For Ed, the chief difference between survivors of sexual abuse who do not offend and those who do lies in their ability to communicate their sexual feelings and to receive and act upon appropriate feedback. This respondent also emphasized the advantage his homosexuality bestows upon him in his work with offenders. He believes the sexual fantasies and feelings both groups experience, because they are outside the boundaries of what society has defined as appropriate, induce feelings of guilt and shame and lead them to deny and keep secret their own sexuality.

At the individual level Ed perceives offenders as experiencing all the factors listed in Table 2. He believes offenders are motivated by the need to feel close and accepted. Their inability to form and maintain appropriate relationships is seen as a result of a felt sense of
inadequacy, poor social skills and their immature emotional development. In his group work with offenders Ed focuses on improving social skills and moving the men beyond shame.

Within their family of origin, Ed believes offenders are often the victims of sexual abuse. They learn inappropriate boundaries from their experience and from parents who have often been abused themselves. He believes that children are given stigmatizing verbal and non-verbal messages about sexuality which foster shame and guilt.

At a cultural level Ed supports the notion supported by others that males are socialized to use power and control over others to meet emotional needs. He also argues that since offenders lack appropriate education on healthy sexuality, providing this information is a societal issue and must be addressed. He acknowledges that society has the responsibility for establishing the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable sexual behavior, but that doing so marginalizes offenders. He argues this process makes it less likely that offenders will talk about their sexuality issues and seek help.

The data gathered from all five respondents supported, to a greater or lesser degree, the notion that sexual
offending behavior springs from a variety of childhood experiences. The childhood experiences, as described by the respondents, which influence the development of an offending pattern of behavior fell within an individual, family environmental, and cultural level of explanation. This data supports the notion that theories which attempt to explain sex offending behavior will be improved by considering the context from which this behavior evolves.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the previous chapter and their relationship to the literature presented in Chapter 2. The respondents in this study expressed perceptions which were in agreement with aspects of the literature. Their perceptions also support the premise stated earlier that childhood experiences impact on the development of an offending pattern of behavior. Links between the respondents' perceptions and the literature will be identified. A second section will discuss the limitations identified in this study. It is the author's hope that in pointing out those limitations they will be avoided by others. It is the authors opinion that limitations, once identified, become strengths.

A final section of this chapter will discuss the implications for social work. It is hoped that, first and foremost, this study will stimulate the curiosity of social workers to design stronger studies, and to explore in greater depth the childhood experiences that influence
sexual development. In an effort to encourage that curiosity, a number of questions arising from this study will be posed.

**Discussion**

The results described in the previous chapter support the underlying assumptions made in Chapter 1; specifically the respondents described childhood experiences which they believe influence the development of sex offending behavior. Support for this assumption however is tempered by the knowledge that non-offenders may also experience many of the same things that offenders do. Those respondents, for example, working with male survivors of sexual abuse pointed out that the majority of male survivors do not become offenders. The assumption that sexuality is a developmental process beginning in childhood was also supported as was the assumption that this process was informed by the experiences children have. These experiences were thought, by most of the respondents, to act as mental guides that were used to fashion a behavioral response congruent with the experience. Respondents also thought that these images did not necessarily remain static but were being reshaped and informed by further experiences.
The results show support for the trauma model. The trauma model predicts that a traumatic incident experienced by a child will be internalized, and that the terror generated by the event will live on in recurring flashbacks. In an effort to cope with the traumatic experience, the child will actively try to make sense of what happened. Like adults, children will mentally replay the scene, but they are also likely to introduce the experience in their physical play, either with themselves or with peers. Boys may be more likely than girls to introduce sexual experience into larger play groups. There may be an interaction effect between boys tendencies to externalize experiences and the socialization of boys to initiate sexual contact. This in turn may partially answer why males are more likely to commit sex crimes than females. In an effort to regain lost power and control children will mentally restructure the event and take on responsibility for it. With responsibility comes guilt and shame. At this point the child has employed two strategies for coping with the fearful aspects of the event. First, they have introduced into play the image created by the event and are attempting to habituate to the event. Secondly, they are re-shaping
the event, in an attempt to put themselves back in charge of their lives. This re-shaping of the event, coupled with its introduction into the peer group through play, suggests that the child at this point is beginning, through practice or through re-enactment, to develop an offending pattern of behavior.

Another feature of the trauma model supported by the data is the tendency of offenders to either become stuck at the developmental level they were at when the trauma occurred, or to regress to that level in times of stress. One possible explanation for this observation is that instead of re-visiting the original abuse experience, they may be re-visiting a subsequent experience when they were sexually intrusive with peers and feeling more in charge of the experience. Alternatively, they may be revisiting a mental representation of the event that grew from the restructuring of the original event.

Another prediction the trauma model makes is that trauma challenges all the basic assumptions that the child has made about themselves and their environment. The work by Terr (1990) and Herman (1992) suggests that traumatized children's beliefs about safety and self worth are called
into question, and that their psycho-social development is impaired. This leads to isolation and a growing sense in the child that because he was unable to prevent the experience he is inadequate at protecting himself in a world that has inexplicably become unsafe, and where he has little value. Especially impaired is trust in self and others. Given that this is the foundation upon which healthy human relationships develop, Herman argues that traumatized children feel guilt and shame and experience a sense of disconnection from the human community. The terror, helplessness and disconnection common to trauma survivors is a by-product of the event, and of the child's inability to make sense of an event which is in fact senseless.

The trauma model explains quite eloquently one developmental pathway from victimized to victimizer, and the respondent's support for this model was universal. However, the respondents also pointed out that a significant number of abusers do not seem to have been abused. One possibility is that the conceptualization (sexual abuse to sexual offending) may be too narrow. In other words trauma, especially trauma to male children, may lead to sexual offending behavior. The rather problematic question this
concept raises is: What is the connection between trauma in general and sexual offending? Although it is beyond the scope of this study to come up with a solution to this question, it will be re-visited in the second section of this chapter.

In summary, the trauma model, when thought of in terms of process, might be described as follows: a traumatic event occurs, the child is not able to make sense of the event but experiences it as life threatening, and terrifying; intrusive flashbacks of the event occur; the child acts to make sense of the event and to win back his power and control lost during the event. Two strategies are employed to cope with the fear and loss of power and control. First, the re-playing of the event, mentally and behaviorally in an attempt to habituate themselves to the event. Second the reshaping of memory to regain power and control. This leads to shame and guilt for an event which the child feels at least somewhat responsible for. As well, trauma tends to lower self esteem, impair psycho-social development, and impact trust in self (inadequacy) and the environment which has proven hostile and dangerous. All of these lead the traumatized child to disconnect and isolate themselves from
others. The important concepts of this model can be found in Table 2, with the exception of faulty attachment and unmet emotional needs. Faulty attachment, however, may be a similar construct to what Herman (1992) refers to as disconnection. The respondents saw offenders as having low self-esteem, few internal controls, few social skills, and few coping strategies. As well, they described offenders as isolated, inadequate, and emotionally impaired.

A second model operating at the individual level addressed in the second chapter, and which was supported by the data offered in Chapter 4 is the learning model. Drawing on Bandura's (1977) social observational learning model, Laws and Marshall (1990) and Marshal and Barbaree (1990) argue that children can learn sex offending behavior, and that being the victim of sexual abuse is not a necessary condition for that learning to take place. According to these researchers children learn behaviors from the models in their environment. These models might be significant adults, peers, siblings, or things they might see in magazines or on television. All that is necessary is an image which the child quite automatically internalizes and recreates in his mind. Another important facet of this
model is the notion that children not only learn behaviors which they then practice, but they learn attitudes which also inform behavior. Exposure to a sexualizing image, coupled with a misogynist attitude, is enough to start the cycle. A final aspect of this theory explains how the offending cycle develops and is maintained. These authors argue that a dynamic feedback loop is established where the image is strengthened by congruent attitudes and beliefs and by the behavior which in turn informs and strengthens the image. All three interact with and change the other.

All five respondents spoke to different aspects of this model, and at the same time mentioned the lack of positive learning taking place in the childhood backgrounds of the sex offenders they have seen. For example, one respondent cited several case examples to illustrate how the negative effects of exposure to physical and sexual violence and to pornography can influence children to try out what they see and read. Two of the respondents suggested that adult sexual behavior introduced into peer groups through play, although not necessarily traumatic, is a powerful influence on children's behavior. This behavior was seen as expanding rapidly as more and more children are introduced to it.
Children engaging in adult sexual behavior with peers were described as playing but at the same time these respondents were quite concerned about the harm it was doing to the children's sexual development. The persistence with which children pursued this behavior was also of concern. The respondents also identified the lack of positive social role models in these children's homes and suggested that non-traumatic events were also shaping offending behavior. Neglectful and non-caring parental figures, who found it difficult to model and communicate boundaries around healthy sexuality, often because of their own abuse, were also seen as influencing sex offending behavior. By denying children the information they need, and by transmitting attitudes that sexuality and sexual feelings are bad and cannot be discussed caretakers foster feelings of guilt and shame in the child, encourage the child to keep feelings and behaviors hidden, and restrict the opportunity for appropriate social feedback which the child might use to self-correct his behavior. Children in these situations were described as learning about sexuality on the streets and developing misconceptions and problematic attitudes about sexuality. This in turn contributes to the growing
sense in the child that they are inadequate to have their needs met appropriately. Several of the therapists spoke about the fantasies that offenders develop and the purposes those fantasies serve in motivating the sexual offense and in rationalizing the behavior. The generation of fantasy which guides the behavior fits the learning model and is also an important aspect of the ecological model advanced by Wolf (1985).

In summary, there was wide support from the respondents in this study for the learning model presented in Chapter 2. Sex offending behavior was seen as a learning process which also encompassed learning attitudes congruent with the behavior. Role models in the child's environment were seen as an important factor in providing behavioral cues and in transmitting attitudes that promote the development of sex offending behavior.

A third perspective presented in Chapter 2, the family systems perspective, received limited support from the data. Although the respondents described factors attributed to the family environment, these factors were not associated with the theoretical perspective advanced by the family systems perspective. For example, as children sex offenders were
described as abused and neglected and as having emotional needs not met by parents, but the respondents did not see children as contributing to the maintenance of this behavior. These respondents also distinguished between non-offending and offending parents and seemed to understand the effects of power in the family. In short, non-offending mothers were not held responsible or described as colluding with abusive fathers. Negative role modeling by father's was most often perceived as problematic, both in terms of his behavior and his attitudes.

The concept from family systems which was perceived by therapists as a contributing factor was that of boundaries; sex offenders were described as having poor boundaries. Respondents working with sexually intrusive children noticed that their clients had not internalized healthy boundaries, especially around their expressions of sexuality. They perceived that for a variety of reasons healthy boundaries were not modeled, either through behavior or attitudes, at home. The respondents believed that a number of factors contribute to the lack of boundaries, including behaviors which purposively or inadvertently prematurely sexualize the child. These experiences ranged from the traumatic to the
non-traumatic. Examples of traumatic experiences included being sexually abused or witnessing the sexual abuse of another family member, especially within a violent context. Non-traumatic experiences included parents not being careful of their sexual relationship, children gaining access to X-rated material, or conversely transmitting puritanical attitudes that suggest to children that sexuality is sinful and restricting communication around their developing sexuality.

To summarize, families were seen as socializing agents, and as responsible for transmitting healthy and age-appropriate information and attitudes to their children. The respondents in this study perceived that as children, sex offenders do not develop healthy boundaries, especially around expressions of sexuality. These respondents saw this process developing from the experiences children have, and from the experiences that are missing. The respondents saw families of sex offenders as failing to promote healthy attitudes through open and age appropriate communication, specifically in the area of sexual development.

The family environment category could be conceptualized as a bridging category linking the individual and the
culture. The responsibility to socialize children to social norms that promote healthy relationships to the benefit of society is, largely, a family responsibility. This can sometimes be an onerous responsibility in an age where both parents work and in lone parent families. The experiences children have within their families impact directly on the individual factors discussed earlier. The role families play was perceived as critical to the development of a healthy sense of self. Boundaries was the only concept from a family systems perspective that was support by the data collected in this study.

A fourth perspective presented in chapter 2, feminist theory, has long hypothesized that sex crimes are not about sexual gratification but rather they are about exerting power and control. Respondents in this study supported this position and added that other cultural attitudes contribute to the development of sex offending behavior. The concept that sexual abuse was a cultural phenomenon was supported. Factors identified by the respondents which were associated with this category included, the intergenerational aspect of sexual abuse and the historical roots of sexual abuse. As well, puritanical religious perspectives which fail to
promote the development of healthy expressions of sexuality were also cited, as was the belief by all respondents that society has not done an adequate job of educating children to express sexuality appropriately.

Other concepts developed from a feminist perspective and were seen as contributing to the development of sex offending behavior revolved around how male children are socialized. Male children, these respondents believed, are socialized to use power and control to meet their needs. They perceive sex offenders as having internalized the belief that the use of power and control to meet their needs is legitimate. Another factor related to male socialization, supported by the data and discussed in feminist literature, revolves around sexual attraction. Males are socialized to be attracted to less powerful females. Sex offenders, who often lack a sense of personal power are attracted to children precisely because children are seen as less powerful, and thus less threatening to these men. Males are also socialized to initiate sexual contact. An interesting finding presented by the two therapists working with children is the reframing which takes place in the minds of male children when they are sexually abused by a female.
These respondents noted that when this happens male children reframe the experience to conform to the cultural expectations that males are in charge of the relationships they have with females. This tendency to reframe the experience to conform to a societal view demonstrates the strength that view is shared and indicates the difficulty we will face in changing it.

Feminist theory also argues that sex offending behavior is influenced by pornography. Respondents agreed with this notion and two respondents in particular perceived that pornography acts to teach children behaviors that are not age appropriate, but which they attempt to emulate. This factor is an important element in the learning model discussed earlier. Finally, respondents pointed to the ways mass media exploit sexuality and create unhealthy sexual attitudes. Advertisements were seen as using sex to sell products. Children are exposed to age-inappropriate material on television and in magazines, which while not considered pornography are perceived as contributing to the premature sexualization of children, and which objectify sexuality by removing the reciprocity and mutual caring inherent in expressions of healthy sexual relationships.
One respondent noted that he believes that our cultural preoccupation and emphasize on sex means that children are exposed to much more sexual material now than ever before. As a result their pseudo-sexual maturity is out-pacing their cognitive capacity to understand their sexuality. Children are consequently presenting sexualized behavior, which makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse. A number of factors identified in the feminist literature as contributing to sex offending behavior was supported by the results of this study.

A fifth perspective presented in the literature, suggests that understanding sex offending behavior without understanding the environmental context from which offenders come will be ineffective. Three ecological models were presented in Chapter 2. The data from this study supports aspects of each one. Finkelhor's (1984) model outlines cultural and psychological factors which motivate the offender's attraction to children, lessen internal inhibitions against having sex with children, lessen external inhibitions that protect children and factors which contribute to the child's vulnerability against attack. Factors which Finkelhor argues contribute to motivation, and
which were supported by the data in this study, include: emotional developmental delays, the need to feel powerful and in control, re-enactment of childhood trauma, narcissistic identification with self as a child, childhood sexual experiences that were either traumatic or conditioning, witnessing sexual abuse and poor social skills. At a socio-cultural level Finklehor suggests that socialization of males to initiate and dominate sexual relationships, the erotic portrayal of children by the media and repressive norms about sexuality all contribute to motivation. These factors were all supported by the data.

Other concepts identified in Finklehor's model and supported by this study's data, include the idea that sexual abuse is a cultural phenomenon, child pornography, family violence, and social isolation. Support was also shown for the concepts which increase the victims vulnerability, including emotional insecurity, emotional and physical deprivation, lack of sexual knowledge, and the coercive skill of the offender.

Faller's (1988) model differs from Finkelhor's in that she conceives that only two preconditions must be met, both existing with the offender. Faller (1988) identifies factors
at a cultural, environmental, family, and individual level. The data gathered from respondents in this study support the factors she identified at the cultural, and individual level. Data coded to the family in this study was coded to the individual by Faller. At a cultural level respondents spoke to the socializing effects that lead males to believe that masculinity is synonymous with power and control over others. At the individual level of experience Faller identified a number of factors which are supported in this study but were not necessarily coded as individual experiences. Like the respondents in this study she believes that childhood experiences impact on the development of sex offending behavior. The respondents she studied described childhood experiences of abuse and neglect. Her finding that offenders' relationships with mothers are more problematic than with fathers was not supported in this study. Respondents in this study described mothers as physically and sexually abused by their husbands. The data also corroborates the link that many offenders experienced a traumatic sexual experience, either by being sexually abused or by witnessing the abuse of others. Another point of agreement is the finding that
many offenders do not recall these types of sexual experiences as traumatic. Faller argues that these factors do not cause offending behavior, but do contribute to the formation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors which strengthen the possibility that sex offending behavior will develop, an idea also supported by this study.

The third ecological model, proposed by Wolf (1985), also supports the notion that childhood experiences contribute to the development of sex offending behavior. These experiences, when coupled with certain personality characteristics, interact to form an addiction cycle. This cycle is fueled by the offender's lack of self-esteem and by sexual fantasy. The deviant fantasy is employed to counteracts the feelings of low self-esteem, but in fact function to lower inhibitions against committing the crime and as a form of rehearsal. Wolf draws heavily on the learning model, which was supported by the respondents in this study. The respondents also spoke to the importance of fantasy and its use by offenders for self care. As well, the central role played by self-esteem in generating the need to be close and accepted by someone non-threatening was also supported by this data. The childhood experiences which
Wolf believes increase the potential for sex offending, and supported by the data in this study, include a sense of isolation, witnessing family violence, physical abuse, and being sexually abused or witnessing sexual abuse. Data from the respondents in this study support aspects of the three ecological theories presented above.

In summary the ecological perspective was supported by the data presented in the previous chapter. Respondents spoke of sex offending behavior as a process which develops over time, and is influenced by childhood experiences. In describing their perceptions of this process they identified factors at the individual, family environmental, and cultural levels of experience. In doing so they incorporated aspects of the various models presented in this section. Given the general agreement in the literature and supported by the data in this study, it would seem imperative that a more complex model be developed.

**Limitations**

This study has a number of limitations. The following discussion will identify those limitations and suggest possible remedies, in the hope that others interested in this topic will benefit from the experience of this author.
The first limitation can be identified within the context of the question: What Childhood Experiences are perceived by Therapists as Having an Impact on their Male Clients Becoming Sex Offenders? This question is not sufficiently specific, consequently the topic could not be explored in the depth it deserves. The question could have been focused in several ways, for example, the following concepts could have been operationalized to be less inclusive. Childhood instead of birth to age 18 could have been defined more narrowly, with a cut off at age 12. This age might better reflect the description of children as opposed to adolescence. A broadly based question was chosen as an appropriate starting point for an exploratory study of therapists perceptions.

Having chosen a broad question a second limitation to this study is the questions which make up the interview guide. They reflected the assumption that sex offending is linked to a sexual experience in childhood. It was discovered that, to a large degree, this was true. Fortuitously for this study, the respondents were eager to point out other experiences that, although not sexual, were
considered important. Later I came to question whether I might have discovered more if I had assumed less.

A third limitation is sample size. Although qualitative research typically draws on fewer respondents than does quantitative research, this study would have been improved had the number of respondents been increased. A larger sample size would have allowed for a more varied educational background. Even with the small sample used there were intriguing differences in emphasis beginning to appear, which may relate to theoretical perspectives based on educational experiences. A larger sample might have included psychiatrists, of which there were none in this study. Despite the small sample size, the choice to include only therapists in private practice was a good one. Only one of the therapists interviewed worked exclusively with offenders, while the remaining four worked with male survivors of sexual abuse. These four were extremely knowledgeable on the topic of sexual abuse generally, and offered opinions on the differences between survivors who offend and those who do not. Therapists working along the entire continuum of sexual abuse presented a broader perspective on the question.
A forth limitation to this study was that no female therapists were included. Although four women were identified in the sampling frame and sent a letter, none volunteered to be interviewed. Women working with male sex offenders may have voiced a different perspective on this subject. As no women were included, this study suffers from a potential gender bias.

A final limitation to this study resides in the choice to study the perceptions of therapists rather than the memories of offenders. Studies of perceptions, even if accurately tapping the perceptions of therapists, can never say with any degree of certainty that those perceptions represent the offender's reality. This study sought therapist's perceptions of their clients' childhood backgrounds. Thus, the respondents were asked to describe experiences they had not experienced themselves. Another problematic aspect of this approach lies in the nature of perceptions. Therapists' perceptions on this topic represent a synthesis of their knowledge and experience of sex offenders but necessarily filtered through their beliefs and attitudes. Perceptions, therefore, can never be a strict recounting of the offender's childhood experiences.
This limitation is offset, however, by the fact that the respondents taking part in this study had worked with a number of offenders over a number of years so that their own perceptions on this topic were informed by this direct contact with sex offenders. A follow-up study with offenders about their own perceptions of their childhood experiences might support or call into question how accurate the perceptions offered by the therapists in this study were.

This study was designed to explore an area that had only recently come to the attention of researchers. As an exploratory study the hope was to shed some light on a topic deserving more attention. Identifying factors which impinge on the healthy development of children is such a topic.

**Implications for Social Work**

At the time this study was conceived society was only just beginning to take note of the number of children acting out sexually. The term coined to describe these children was sexually reactive. The belief was that these children were reacting to their sexual abuse experience and that their behavior was a manifestation of the trauma suffered or that they were exhibiting learned behavior. As more
attention became focused on these children it became clear that this initial assumption was only partly true. It was more true of girls but less true of boys. A significant minority of boys had not been sexually abused, and yet here they were exhibiting behaviors that had all the hallmarks of sex offending behavior. They were targeting younger children, they were employing coercive measures, and they were engaging in behaviors that could not be considered normal sex play. Two other aspects of this behavior differentiated it from normal sex play. There was a compulsive quality to the behavior and it was persistent. These two qualities made the behavior difficult to extinguish. Perhaps the most disturbing piece of information about these children is that they employ fantasy to inform their behavior. These fantasies are not as sophisticated as those used by adult offenders, but then children themselves are not as sophisticated as adults. A new term was coined to distinguish this group of children from the sexually reactive group: They are referred to as sexually intrusive children. Although many have learned adult sexual behavior through an abuse experience, others have not. The implication for social workers in this
developing understanding is that as one respondent said when discussing how his perspective has changed said, "...and I guess I've learned that it (offending) begins at an earlier age". Offending not only starts at an earlier age than once was thought but we still do not fully understand exactly how that process starts for the non-abused group.

The implication from this work and corroborated by the literature, is that for some, sex offending behavior begins in childhood, has enormous implications for research in the field of sexual abuse. Compared to treating adult offenders who have a life time of offending experience, and whose patterns of behavior are firmly entrenched, turning children away from this behavior might prove to be a much easier task. This was the opinion expressed by the two therapists who work with children. A related aspect to this approach is that the number of victimization's prevented over an offender's lifetime could prove to be enormous. Intervention with sexually intrusive children represents a huge saving in emotional pain and suffering caused by sexual abuse. Early identification and intervention represents an equally significant monetary savings in treatment costs associated with victims and offenders, incarceration costs
for offenders, lost wages and lost potential for both victims and offenders. In an era of ever shrinking social service dollars governments are demanding a bigger bang for the buck. Savings at this level represent an enormous bang for a relatively small buck, but as social workers we must make our case that intervention at this level is needed. Research in this field will help establish the need for intervention at this level.

This research confirms the need, identified by others, to turn our attention to the development of ecological models capable of reflecting the complex dynamics at work. Focusing our attention on children who are acting out sexually will allow us to study these dynamics within the context of family. Faller (1988) is quite critical of family systems theory and argues for a reformulation of family theory that does not shift responsibility for sex offending from offenders to non-offenders. If that is to happen, I believe, we must examine sex offending behavior in children to better understand what is happening in the family. As stated earlier I think adults who take on the job of raising children are faced with an onerous task especially in safeguarding children from the harmful
cultural messages and in imbuing children with the interpersonal skills needed to form mutually respectful relationships. Social workers have an obligation to identify ways that can help families grow stronger.

Social work, more than any other profession, encourages its workers to frame problems within their environmental context. There are two reasons for doing so. The first, human problems do not arise in a vacuum nor can they be understood when removed from the environmental context from which they come. The second, which I think of as a social work value, suggests that to study a human problem removed from its social and environmental context is to rob the person of his humanity. To many people sex offenders are not human. An implication from this study, and especially the finding that sex offending begins earlier than we once believed, is that when seen within the context of their life experiences even sex offenders deserve to have their humanity respected.

A number of questions arise from this research. Given that sex offending behaviors appear in childhood, and given the social and environmental context experienced by sex offenders, are we doing enough to heal these childhood
hurts? Are we giving sex offenders the resources they need to meet the challenges inherent in forming mutually supportive and respectful relationships? Are we addressing the cultural stereotypes that lead some men to form beliefs and attitudes that women and children are there for the taking? Do we truly understand the effects that pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation by the media have on children?

Therapists also spoke of the emotional deprivation and physical abuse experienced by their clients as children. The whole field of unmet emotional needs is largely overlooked in British Columbia. Social workers lack a legal mandate to intervene in families where they can not show that children are at risk of sexual, physical or emotional harm. Although new child protection legislation will be enacted shortly that does attempt to define emotional abuse, it will take time before we know how well it works in practice. The findings in this study suggest that more emphasis should be put on looking into the short and long term effects of children's emotional needs not being met.

In summary, there are a number of implications which this study would endorse. The need to address sexuality
formation in children, and to better understand how that development goes awry has enormous importance to the field of sexual abuse. Working with children at the point when their expressions of sexuality first become problematic represents the earliest possible point of intervention. Early intervention implies savings in emotional damage and monetary costs associated with treatment and lost potential. More and better research is warranted in this area. Knowledge about the childhood experiences of sex offenders implies an ecological approach to this problem. As well, knowing what we now know about the early experiences sex offenders have in childhood suggests a need to provide counseling that goes beyond behavioral techniques aimed at stopping the behavior and social skills training. There is a serious need to address and help heal some very deep wounds.
References


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Appendix C

Interview Guide

Therapist Perceptions

1. I would like to start by having you describe your theory about how sex offenders get started.

2. During the beginning phase of your work with a client what background information do you ask for?
   a) Do you take a sexual history? If yes then b; if no 3.
   b) How far back into childhood do you probe?

3. In the beginning phase of your work what percentage of your clients report being sexually abused?
   a) What other types of childhood sexual experiences do your clients report?

4. In the middle phase of your work what percentage of your clients report being sexually abused?
   a) How would you describe this discrepancy on responses?
   b) What other types of childhood experiences do your clients report during this phase of treatment?

5. In the closing phase of your work what percentage of clients reveal, for the first time, a history of sexual abuse?
   a) What other types of childhood sexual experiences do your clients report?

6. How might a sexual experience in childhood contribute to the development of sexual offending behavior?
   a) Under what conditions might this take place?
      i) parental reactions.
      ii) mixed messages in the home.
      iii) other environmental factors.
   b) What elements of the experience do you believe are most important?
      i) child’s developmental level.
      ii) coercion or their felt lack of control.
      iii) emotional maturity incongruent with the experience.
7. Based on your experience how would you describe the early sexual development of your clients?
   a) How does that differ from what you know about normal childhood sexual development?
   b) In thinking about the sexual experiences your clients have reported, have you noted any patterns which they seem to share?
      i) Type of experience.
      ii) Age at onset.
      iii) Exposure to sexualizing experience at home, (excluding abuse).

8. Drawing on your experience in working with sex offenders could you describe for me the kinds of experiences they have had:
   a) Before age six.
   b) Between 7 and 12.
   c) During adolescence.

9. Over the course of your work with male sex offenders how have your perceptions regarding their pre-offense sexual behavior changed?

10. If you were to catalogue factors which you think predispose a male to offend sexually, what would that list look like?

11. Has anything occurred to you over the course of this interview which you think might be important, but I have not asked about.