

THE POST-DISCLOSURE EXPERIENCE OF THE NON-OFFENDING FATHER:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

by

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ABSTRACT

Title: The Post-Disclosure Experience of the Non-Offending
Father: An Exploratory Study of Child Sexual Abuse

Although there is an increasing amount of literature on child sexual abuse, there is a dearth of information on the experiences of non-offending fathers of sexually abused children. Uncovering the issues that these fathers encounter after learning about the abuse of their children is essential in designing a therapeutic framework to help these men and their families.

This qualitative study explored the experiences of four non-offending fathers of sexually abused children. Each subject was interviewed on video tape for approximately one hour using a general interview guide. The results were categorized into four areas: initial reaction to disclosure, changes in relationships, self issues, the recovery process. Two general themes emerged from these categories: disruption in the father's role as protector and the process of regaining a sense of normalcy. These findings point to the importance of including non-offending fathers in the treatment plans of counselling agencies working with victims of child sexual abuse.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the preponderance of research conducted in the last decade on child sexual abuse it has become alarmingly clear that child sexual abuse is a major social problem in our society. Most of the literature has focused on the victims and the perpetrators (Finkelhor, 1986). However, relative to the sheer volume of literature on the subject, very little has been written on the effects of child sexual abuse on the remaining members of the victim's family. Though some recent studies have begun to identify the effects of child sexual abuse on the associated siblings (Johnson, 1988; Marshal, 1986) and non-offending mothers (Charles, 1987; Caplan & Hall-McCorquodale, 1985), there is an absence of information on the effects of child sexual abuse on non-offending fathers. "Father" will be defined as the biological father or the legal step-father of the child or children who were sexually abused. "Non-offending" will be defined as not having committed the abuse against the child or children. "Child" will be defined as a person 18 years of age or younger at the time of the abuse being committed. This absence of information on non-offending fathers is understandable in light of the research pointing out "that a great deal of sexual abuse occurs at the hands of close family

members, particularly fathers and step-fathers" (Finkelhor, 1984).

There have been a variety of definitions of sexual abuse put forth by law and policy makers, researchers, clinicians as well as advocate groups. It is necessary to develop an appropriate definition of child sexual abuse in order to adequately understand the context in which to compare and contrast fathers' experiences. There are three criteria essential to defining this kind of abuse: firstly, the age of the victim; secondly, the type of sexual behavior encountered by the victim; and thirdly, the criteria for defining the sexual behavior as necessarily abusive (Finkelhor, 1986).

Regarding the types of sexual behavior that occurred, the literature refers to two broad categories: contact abuse and non-contact abuse. Finkelhor (1986) defines contact abuse as "all behaviors that do involve sexual contact, including fondling of breasts and genitals, intercourse, and oral or anal sex" (p. 23). Non-contact abuse encompasses two types of behavior: "encounters with exhibitionists and solicitation to engage in sexual activity, where no physical contact occurred" (Finkelhor, p. 23).

What defines sexual behavior as abusive usually involves an age difference between the offender and the victim, often of five years in childhood and ten years in adolescence, as well as the power that this age difference gives the perpetrator over the victim (Fromuth, 1983). But this does not address the abuse

perpetrated by peers. This issue has been addressed by the requirement that the sexual behavior be unwanted (Russell, 1983), forced (Burnam, 1985), or coercive (Wyatt, 1985). For the purposes of this present study sexual abuse will be defined as "the sexual exploitation and/or touching of a person who is developmentally and/or physically unable to resist the contact" (Jones, 1987). This definition covers both contact and non-contact abuse as well as the developmental and physical abilities of the victim to resist the perpetrator. These operational definitions will give some criteria for choosing subjects as well as comparisons of this research with past and future studies.

A survey probing for a variety of forms of sexual abuse (Russell, 1983) found only a small number of the 930 San Francisco women who reported having been victimized before age 14 (experienced unwanted sexual touching) actually reported being abused by a relative. If a portion of those relatives included brothers, cousins, and uncles then in many of the cases the father of the victim was not the offending person. Father-daughter sexual abuse holds a lot of "taboos" in our society and the effects of such abuse would be assumed to be profound and severe. Non-offending fathers are far less sensational topics for research than understanding the impact of abuse on the victim, the prevalence of the problem, and understanding the offender. These areas have taken priority

over understanding the "ripple effect" of the abuse into other members of the victim's immediate family, and the larger systems involved, such as school, church and work place.

As in any trauma experienced by a family, child sexual abuse introduces difficulties for all members of the family. The purpose of this study is to begin to understand the effects of child sexual abuse on non-offending fathers of the victims. It is hoped that by beginning to understand non-offending fathers additional research will be generated and a more comprehensive treatment process can be offered families in which child sexual abuse has occurred.

The question being addressed by this study is: What are the experiences of non-offending fathers following the disclosure of the sexual abuse of one or more of their children? This will include an exploration of their initial response to the disclosure of sexual abuse, how they attempted to deal with this information, and how it affected their family. "Experiences" will be defined as the perceptions, thoughts, emotions and actions of the father.

It is hoped that from understanding the effects of child sexual abuse on the child's non-offending father and his family it will be possible to begin to clarify treatment needs and to clarify the need for further research into the effects and treatment of child sexual abuse on a larger systems level.

Chapter II of this thesis will explore the theoretical and research literature on child sexual abuse as it relates to a

father's response to this traumatic event. It will include some discussion on the roles of the father in the family and how these roles may be affected by an abuse of a child. Finally, the possible losses and accompanying grief experienced by a father will be described with some hypotheses made as to possible helpful therapeutic alternatives.

Chapter III will describe the methodology used in this study as well as the rationale behind choosing a qualitative approach. A description of choice of subjects, the data collection process, and the process of data analysis will also be included.

Chapter IV will present the conceptual findings of this study. This will include the emerging categories, their respective properties, the meaning that these properties have for each category, and the meaning that each category has in clarifying the experience of these fathers. These will be supported by quotations from the men interviewed.

The final Chapter will discuss the extent to which these fathers support and/or add to, or refute the theory developed in Chapter II. It will also identify the limitations and make conclusions concerning the impact of these findings on practice, and identify the need for further research.

CHAPTER II

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE NON-OFFENDING FATHER

Currently there exists a dearth of information concerning how child sexual abuse affects the non-offending father. In order to attempt to understand the experience of the non-offending father, a theoretical framework will be developed from the related literature. Section A of this Chapter will attempt to clarify the non-offending fathers' post-disclosure experience of his child's sexual abuse. Section B will outline the roles a father may experience in his family and discuss how these roles may be thwarted or altered by the disclosure of his child's sexual abuse.

Effects of Disclosure of Sexual Abuse on the Father

A child who has been sexually abused may display a variety of disturbing behaviors prior to verbally disclosing the abuse to another person. If the child is reluctant to disclose the abuse, as in many cases, behavioral indicators may be the initial cues to parents that abuse has occurred (Kope, 1984). These behaviors may vary according to the age of the victim, type of abuse, and relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, and include self-destructive behavior, running away, depressive symptoms, anxiety reactions, and delinquency (Kempe &

Kempe, 1979). This change in a child's behavior may elicit reactions in the father who witnesses and looks for the meaning behind the behavior. He may be confused initially and wonder if either he or his spouse needs to change their parenting in some way. If the child is running away, the father may misinterpret the behavior as defiant and seek to control the child with increased discipline. This may increase the conflict with the child and other members of the family, while missing the message inherent in the behavior. As a result the father may be confused and frustrated.

Further problems with the child's behavior may lead to seeking professional help from a school counsellor, doctor, or therapist. This professional may, at some point, interpret the pre-disclosure behavior as an indication of sexual abuse. This may then lead to an exploration process during which the child discloses that sexual abuse has occurred (MacFarlane, 1986). Once the child discloses the identity of the perpetrator, the professional must then decide if the child or other children are at risk of further abuse. If the professional person has reason to believe the risk to the child is present, he or she must contact the provincial Ministry of Social Services and Housing (Section 7, B.C. Family and Child Service Act).

If the child does not know or will not disclose the identity of the perpetrator, the father of the child frequently comes under suspicion (Finkelhor, 1984; Regehr, 1988). Questioning of a non-offending father about his role in the

abuse of his child can be a devastating occurrence. He may be interviewed by social workers and police, and go through the turmoil of defending himself against false accusations. This may also bring him into conflict with his wife, or partner, and children, as well as his extended family and friends. Even if cleared, he may have to deal with the lingering doubts of these people.

Apart from a false accusation, a father will have to go through the process of learning the roles of the various social agencies involved in a sexual abuse investigation. The literature reflects a growing concern about the effects of this, usually protracted, process on the victim (Conte, 1984). As with victims, it is anticipated that insensitive or incompetent handling of the case and/or the victim and family members, will lead to an increase of stressful reactions on the part of the father over and above what he may have experienced if all facets of the investigation process were handled well.

The reaction of the parents to the disclosure has been noted as having a significant impact on the behavior and treatment of the victim (Pelletier and Handy, 1986; Sgroi, 1982). One can only imagine what this experience must be like for fathers. Disclosure, however, is only the beginning as a father must then negotiate contact with the police department, the appropriate social services agency, the medical system where an examination of the victim is required or physical treatment needed, the court process if charges should be laid against the

perpetrator, and the school system if teachers must be made aware of the abuse and corresponding behavior problems. As well as these systems, a father may have to approach his employer to explain his stress on the job or needed time off for meetings and/or rest. The sheer number of professionals involved at this point may be overwhelming. The father may also have to work out conflict with his spouse which may arise as a result of the stressful processes put into motion by the abuse and its subsequent disclosure.

Charles (1987) describes the various experiences of non-offending mothers of children who were sexually abused by the father, or father figure in the family. These mothers encountered divided loyalties between the victim and perpetrator; changed relationships at various levels; feelings of guilt, helplessness and confusion at not being able to protect their children; and a process of somehow reorganizing their lives into normal functioning as a family. Non-offending fathers may very well experience similar issues. If the father knows the perpetrator (another member of the family, family friend or teacher, for example), he may experience a kind of divided loyalty.

Regehr (1988) cites feelings of non-offending parents which include guilt, feelings of failure as parents, embarrassment, and self-criticism. This may result in over-protection of their children. Fathers may experience anger toward the perpetrator as well as a need for retribution. They may also experience

some anger toward the victim if the child's actions are perceived as contributing to the vulnerability by perhaps being in the "wrong part of town" or at a party where the "wrong crowd" hangs out. This is especially noticeable when the victim is a teen-ager (Regehr, 1988). A father may experience sadness and regret at exposing the child to the court process with its interviews, hearings, testimony and trial proceedings. Wanting to protect a young child who has suffered the trauma of sexual abuse from the effects of testifying under cross-examination is understandable. The child, the father, and the rest of the family all must endure the emotional tumult around resolving the effects of the abuse. The father may also experience tremendous loss similar to the losses experienced by non-offending mothers (Charles, 1987). Loss of the dream of an ideal family, loss of a positive childhood experience for all of his children, loss of harmony in his marriage, and perhaps loss of a relationship with the perpetrator made especially difficult if the perpetrator was a son, close relative, or a close friend.

Men have traditionally been seen by social service professionals as not overtly emotional and in some cases seen as insensitive or distant (Walsh, 1988). Fathers, as contrasted with mothers, may have a different way of expressing their emotions around the abuse of their children which may be reflected in reports of their experiences (Walsh, 1988). It is important to be aware of possible gender differences.

Traditionally, non-contact forms of abuse such as exhibitionism, unwanted verbal sexual propositions, and voyeurism have generally been regarded as a nuisance, having little psychological impact on the victim. However, exhibitionism is "widely considered a criminal act, the intent of which is to shock and frighten, and therefore merits the same consideration as contact abuse, which may, in some cases, be less intimidating to a child" (Finkelhor, 1986, p. 25). As well, a sexual proposition coming from an inappropriate source such as a close relative, teacher, or caregiver may have a significant effect on a child. Voyeurism, once discovered by the victim, may again produce a significant psychological reaction if the victim perceives her privacy, or even safety, to have been violated. The reactions of the father to learning about the abuse of his child may also be determined somewhat by the type of abuse encountered by the child (Finkelhor, 1986). The relationship of the perpetrator to the victim may elicit a particular response from the father. The sex and/or age of the child may also contribute to the type of response experienced by the father. These characteristics may also have some impact on the lasting effects of the abuse on the father.

Contact abuse includes the full range of sexual contact with the victim "including fondling of breasts and genitals, intercourse, and oral or anal sex" (Finkelhor, 1986, p. 23). Though results of empirical studies are inconsistent, it does appear that generally contact abuse results in greater trauma

for the victim than does non-contact abuse, with penetration offences being some of the most traumatic (Russell, 1986). Key factors influencing the degree of trauma experienced by victims has been described by Groth (1978). These include situations where the abuse: occurs over an extended duration, occurs with a close relative, includes penetration of some kind, and is perpetrated in an aggressive manner. MacFarlane (1978) also included abuse in which the victim participates in some way, where parents react unsupportively to the disclosure, and the child is old enough to understand that cultural taboos have been violated.

The reaction of a father to the knowledge that his child had been abused in this way would depend upon the perception held by the father about this type of abuse. Indeed, his response may become more intense as he learns of the possible negative effects of this type of abuse on his child. It would seem that a father's experience of his child having been abused would be influenced by his understanding of the type of the abuse that occurred. The possible effects this event may have on his child, both immediately and in the long term, would also contribute to his reaction as he considers his role in not being able to keep the abuse from happening and in helping the victim and the family as a whole recover.

Father Role

A crisis event such as the sexual abuse of one's child may introduce changes or emotional reactions revolving around a father's perception of his role in the family. Erikson (1985) theorized about the various roles the father plays in child development, such as psychosocial identity, historical identity, family unity, and a sense of personal power and control. Erikson speculates that a crisis can prevent a child from mastering developmental tasks and arrest development at or near the point of the trauma. From this perspective, the various roles of the father (as in identity formation) most certainly will be affected.

Lynn (1974) describes the various roles played by fathers: authority figure, masculine model, problem-solver, protector, punisher, nurturer. Should abuse of a child appear as failure on the part of the father to fulfill his role in the family, it could be predicted that the father's experience of that apparent failure could jeopardize his relationship with the abused child and with other family members. Green (1976) emphasizes the need for a father's role to be expanded to include the sharing of feelings even if those feelings are difficult. This intimacy with other family members, even in times of crisis, can enhance developmental growth in children as well as enhance the marriage (Green, 1976). It appears that changes in the father's experience of his role, and of his success at that role, also

affect other family members in significant ways, not the least of which is in the area of the development of the children (Cath, Gurwitt and Ross, 1982).

Of the variety of roles played by fathers, the one most overtly thwarted by the sexual abuse of a child is that of protector. Regehr (1988) discusses the guilt experienced by non-offending parents who perceive their inability to protect their abused child from harm. A father may be completely unable to protect a child from being abused because perpetrators are notoriously secretive and deceitful about their actions. Charles (1987) found a certain degree of this ambivalence about the protector role in her study of non-offending mothers. If a father does not believe he can protect his child from all the unhealthy elements of the environment, then he is less likely to feel guilt about not being able to protect his child absolutely.

Another component of a father's experience of his protector role comes into play subsequent to the disclosure of the abuse. A father may feel acute anguish at having to allow his abused child, and the rest of his family, to experience the post-disclosure trauma of the child protection investigation, police investigation, and criminal court proceedings. The father may be frustrated in his attempts to shield his child from the many interviews and testimonies usually accompanying the post-disclosure processes. The father is often unable to protect the family from incompetent or insensitive investigators as well. These feelings of anguish and frustration may be exacerbated if

the perpetrator does not go to trial, or is not convicted. Ironically, counselling so often sought by families can carry a certain stigma or at least a constant reminder of the abuse from which the father may have difficulty in protecting the family. The father may also begin to overprotect the child in order to compensate for previously "failing" to do so.

Another role affected by the abuse of a child is that of nurturer (Lynn, 1974). A father whose child has been abused may become overly sensitive to how his physical and verbal affection may be misconstrued by the abused child. If the child were seduced or coerced by the perpetrator using affection as bait, the father may wonder if his actions toward the child are in fact giving mixed messages. He may also become hyper-vigilant in screening his actions as possibly having sexual overtones for the child. A simple hug or arm around the shoulder of the child may be seen by the father as now associated with the abuse of a sexually abused child. This sensitivity may also be generalized to other children in the family or all children as the father becomes more cautious about how his actions are perceived by children. This can be a tremendous loss for a father as the innocence of fatherly affection then becomes a reminder of the abuse of his child. If the father was physically attracted to his children, the heightened sensitivity to sexual implications may also result in feelings of guilt around the taboos of sexual feelings. Unable to freely nurture his children, the non-

offending father may himself need some treatment around this issue.

As a role model for his children, a father must work with his own perception of masculinity (Lynn, 1974). Often this is confounded by ambivalence around expressing emotions. He may have difficulty expressing and resolving his sadness, grief, fear and anger aroused by the abuse event. He may be unsure what posture to take relative to his children in dealing with his emotions. Should he fail to meet his spouse's expectations of how a man should handle this, conflict could arise which would hinder the functioning of the family and possibly affect the victim's progress in treatment. It is common for children to internalize blame for their parents' conflict which, in the case of an abused child, could make successful treatment a difficult task. If the father views himself as the protector he may question whether he should act out some form of retribution on the abuser.

If the father is seen as an authority figure or punisher in the family, the abuse of a child may lead to a polarizing of the regular discipline pattern (Lynn, 1974). One response could be to become lenient with the abused child in an attempt to be sensitive to, yet not adding to, the trauma the child has already experienced. This may lead to resentment and some loss of control on the part of the other children, as well as some additional behavioral disturbances in the victim. Conversely, the father of an abused child may "clamp down" on his discipline

of the child, perhaps feeling that a lack of proper parental control in the first place contributed to the abuse in some way. This may cause additional conflict as the abused child or other children feel suppressed in their goal to get on with their development. Conflict with the spouse may also come as a result of different views of discipline or punishment depending on the individual parent's perceptions. This again may contribute to the father's loss of the way the family used to be and of his beliefs about his environment as a safe and predictable place.

The father's role as problem-solver could be enhanced or frustrated as a result of learning about his child's abuse (Lynn, 1974). A father who successfully negotiates the different agencies and the many processes necessary to resolve the issues arising out of the abuse may gain an increased sense of worth for having successfully helped his family. Overcoming the hardships and moving on to recovery could be a very satisfying accomplishment. A father, on the other hand, who is confounded by "the system", confused by his own feelings, hurt by conflicts within the family, and is increasingly distant from the ones he loves could experience failure as a problem-solver for his family. The resulting internal issues of guilt, loss, failure and anxiety may or may not be successfully resolved through some form of treatment or within the healing power of the family system. One thing is clear, his perception of his role as problem-solver will be affected in some way, positively or negatively, by the sexual abuse of his child. Thus the

father has many roles, articulated and unspoken, which will be affected by a traumatic event introduced into the family system.

The victim has been the focus of treatment for sexual abuse in the past (Conte, 1984). With the increasing evidence that other members of the victim's family are profoundly affected by the disclosure of the abuse, treatment must move to a broader, systemic approach (Giarretto, 1982). Counselling may be a combination of helpful as well as difficult experiences for the father, depending upon the sensitivity and competence of the therapist and the issues being dealt with by the father and his family. The non-offending father will have to be included in some form of family, group, and/or individual therapy. This will provide a necessary outlet for him to express his emotions around the sexual abuse of his child, including changes and losses in his relationships, as well as his perception of himself. Agencies will have to become more aware of working with all members of the family, not just the victim of the sexual abuse (Freeman, 1981).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Method: Exploratory Research

In beginning to understand a phenomenon, research must strive to gain conceptual clarity of the phenomenon in question. Schrag (1967) suggests that in theory construction, one must move from everyday observation to constructing theories first in "common sense" terms and unorganized impressions. From there, one may move to more systematic observation and describe theory in more defined concepts, generalizations and law-like assumptions. From this point, research may move on to controlled experiments leading to theoretical concepts, postulates and theorems. To date, courses of treatment and theories of the impact of sexual abuse on the non-offending and non-offended members are not based on systematic observation or well-defined theories. For this reason, this study will attempt to lay the conceptual foundations for non-offending fathers of sexually abused children.

Arkava and Lave (1983) suggest that when a research topic is poorly understood it is appropriate to engage in "exploratory-descriptive research" (p. 190). Exploratory is an appropriate term to illustrate the type of research being conducted in this study. As little is known about the

experiences of non-offending fathers, this is new territory with few reference points with which to compare the observations. At this stage of inquiry, a qualitative approach to gathering information and analysing data will provide a rich baseline (Patton, 1980) from which to understand the phenomena and to plan for treatment. It is the quality of the men's experiences, and not a quantified standard, that is of interest at this preliminary stage of research.

Selection of Fathers

The subjects were selected on the grounds that they were known not to be the offender, their child was abused before turning 19 years of age, they were the biological or step-father of the child abused, and had been in some form of treatment as a result of the disclosure of the abuse. The availability of fathers for this study was a problem as few men could be found who met the criteria for the study. Many of the agencies contacted in the Greater Vancouver region of British Columbia for referral were supportive of, even enthusiastic about, the study, but regretted that they had no fathers in treatment. Only one agency ran a group for non-offending fathers.

A letter of introduction (see Appendix A) was sent to six agencies. Five men in a group for non-offending fathers at one agency appeared to meet the criteria. They had all been to at least two of the group meetings. Another father who met the

criteria was a client of the researcher at the Family Practice Unit of the University of British Columbia.

Three of the men in the fathers' group agreed to be interviewed, as did the client of the researcher. The ages of the four fathers ranged from 28 years to 59 years. Three of the four were biological fathers. One man was the legal step-father of the children abused. Three of the four were living with the biological mother of the abused child and the fourth was separated but still in daily contact with the children. The number of children in each family ranged from two to four.

The gross family income of each subject ranged from under \$30,000 per year to over \$50,000. The fathers' vocations included: apartment manager, professor, banker, and retired heavy machine operator. All lived in the Greater Vancouver area.

Data Collection: Development of the Interview Guide

Common methods of qualitative data collection include: questionnaires, observation, telephone interviews, and face-to-face interviews (Charles, 1987). Face-to-face interviews were chosen in the present study as sexual abuse is an emotion-laden and difficult experience for a family and it was believed that a face-to-face interview will allow for flexibility and sensitivity to the fathers' emotional needs that may surface during the interview. Such an interview also "encourages the

greatest possible freedom and honesty of expression" (Seltiz, Wrightman & Cook, 1986, p. 298).

The interview guide (see Appendix B) allows for questions to be clustered around themes that the researcher believes may be relevant to the fathers' experiences around their child's sexual abuse (Patton, 1980). This information for question selection was deduced from what is known about related areas (i.e., child sexual abuse, fathering roles, grief and loss, and experiences of non-offending mothers). Four professional therapists currently working with sexual abuse victims and their families were also consulted as to relevant themes from which to develop questions. The interviewer also allowed for subjects to elaborate on their answers if needed, or accept experiences that the fathers wished to include that were not addressed by interview questions. It was anticipated that the guided interview method of data collection would provide the balance between structure and flexibility best suited to exploratory-descriptive research.

The first interview revealed the following emerging themes: the need to help the abused child, inability to prevent the abuse, changes in familial relationships, and loss of healthy homeostasis in the family system. These were listened for in subsequent interviews and if fathers did not mention them as part of their experiences, probes were inserted at appropriate times to ask about similar experiences (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Credibility

In a qualitative study, the credibility of the statements made by interviewees is important (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is important to be mindful of key factors which might influence the subjects' statements about their experiences. Some factors may include: guilt around not being able to protect the child, not wishing to disclose memories of the fathers' own childhood victimization, desires to please the interviewer, or fears of being judged. It was anticipated that instructions given to the subjects by the interviewer before the interview would address this problem adequately (see Appendix C). The meaning that the fathers attribute to their experience is accepted as having face validity (Arkava and Lave, 1983). Video taping the interviews helps to assure that the data will be recorded without bias as to what the interviewer might regard as significant.

As this study is attempting to explore "experiences", these will first be defined as the fathers' "perceptions, thoughts, emotions and actions" around the abuse of the child. These experiences can range from intrapsychic to interpersonal, from intrafamilial to extrafamilial. Therefore, questions will be asked around those levels of experience. It is also anticipated that by the interviewer sharing some previous experiences of non-offending fathers that subjects will find it easier to share non-biased statements of their own experiences.

The interview guide was pretested on two professional therapists working with sexual abuse victims and their families. The wording and order of some questions were altered for clarity and to enhance the flow of the interview. As well, some additional questions were included to cover relevant themes not included in the initial draft of the interview guide.

Procedure

A research proposal was made to the University with the permission of the researcher's field instructor and placement agency (see Appendix D) to conduct this study. The study was approved (see Appendix E) by the University and subjects were contacted by phone following their permission being granted for contact through the referring agency. Appointments for video taped interviews were made with each father. The three men from the outside counselling agency were interviewed at that agency using the agency's video equipment. The three men were interviewed on three different evenings with only the researcher in the room with each individual subject. The fourth subject was interviewed at the U.B.C. Family Practice Unit using that agency's video equipment.

All four fathers were given two copies of a consent form (see Appendix F), one to read, sign and date before the interview, and one to keep as a copy of the consent. The interviews ranged in length from thirty-five minutes to one hour

and ten minutes. Two of the interviews were transcribed and their contents coded for analysis. An example of a transcript is included in the Appendices (see Appendix G). Of the four interviews, two were chosen for transcription on the basis of the subjects' clarity and completeness of their statements of experience. The transcripts provided a visual display of data to ease the process of analysis. Only two transcripts were made because of the length (20 pages single spaced) and time it took to accomplish this. As well, the transcripts were of the most complete statements of experience so any new and relevant experiences could be easily coded from the remaining video tapes alone. It was assumed that the two transcripts would establish an adequate baseline of relevant categories. The subjects were allowed to elaborate on any question as much as they wished.

Data Analysis

The process of analysis followed the grounded theory approach where raw data generates conceptual categories and their properties (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This allowed for the linking of the categories and properties into a theory and to see if the theory found in the literature was relevant to the categories or themes discovered (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The researcher's prior knowledge and the experiences of professionals working with families of sexually abused children

were influencing factors. These factors led to an initial conceptualization of the experiences of non-offending fathers.

The data analysis included the researcher's prior knowledge of the subject of study as well as allowing categories to emerge out of the raw data (Glaser, 1978). The analysis was "inductive" in that it allowed for themes to emerge, and "deductive" in that the data was perceived through a certain amount of prior experience and knowledge.

As the transcripts were read, emerging categories were noted and coded along the right hand margin. A point is one or more sentences with a common subject linking them (Miles and Huberman, 1984). For example, a father described in several sentences, and on several occasions, his contempt for the child protection worker involved with the case. This was coded as "Contempt re protection". A list was then made for the set of codes for each transcript. Many codes were similar between the two transcripts which allowed categories to emerge quite readily. An example of an irrelevant point would be unnecessary detail in a father's choice of illustration.

Merging codes will lead to categories of experience that were common to non-offending fathers. As well, themes will emerge from the categories, highlighting the experience of the fathers.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The interviews revealed four main categories of experience that were common to all of the fathers. These were: 1) the initial reaction to the disclosure; 2) changes in relationships; 3) intra-psychic or "self" issues; 4) the recovery process (see Appendix H). This chapter will discuss the meaning of these categories using examples from the interviews and will explore how the categories relate to each other. These categories of the fathers' experience have been delineated for discussion purposes in this chapter.

Category 1: Initial Reaction to Disclosure

This category includes three properties: perceptions, thoughts and emotions.

Perceptions

One property of the fathers' reaction to the disclosure centred around their perception of their role of protector in the family. There was some ambivalence about their ability to prevent the victim from having been abused. As the fathers anguished over the pain experienced by their children, they were at a loss as to what more they could have done at the time to

prevent the abuse. The perception was that, given their level of knowledge of potential risks for abuse at the time it occurred, they had failed in protecting their children from being abused. They commented on how they were unaware of the potential hazards to their children in various situations. The following statements clearly spoke to this issue:

"We just weren't in tune with what was going on. You think you can protect your kids from this, but you can't."

"We had no idea. Looking back, I should have been more aware. Back then, it wasn't an issue like it is today. And who would suspect your son of such a thing."

"I can't be with her all the time. I wouldn't want to. I felt so helpless. I don't know how I could have prevented it. I don't think I could."

This perception contributes directly to a general theme that emerged regarding the disruption in the father's role as protector.

Another perception held by the fathers involved the belief, common in many families that have experienced a traumatic event, that this kind of thing could not happen to them. In many ways, the abuse of a child shatters the belief that the world will treat them fairly:

"I couldn't believe this could happen to one of my children. My wife and I could never have imagined this happening."

"Sometimes you think, 'What did we do to deserve this?', but that just makes you crazier."

Another perception that became apparent in the fathers' experiences around the disclosure of the abuse was that their

children were safe with other members of the family and with the friends of the family. This soon became inconsistent with the fathers' knowledge of the abuse of the victims. In each case, the victims had been abused by a brother, a teen-age male babysitter, or a friend of the father. The mistaken belief was that the loyalties between family members or friends was enough to prevent sexual abuse. Understandably, the fathers had believed that cultural taboos around sexual abuse made this a non-issue:

"You were talking about a kid who was the altar boy at the local Anglican Church who was for all intents and purposes the all-Canadian boy, who we knew their family, who the sisters played with Robert and that's how we got to know them."

"Well, the first thing is you're shocked! We never knew about such things. We would hardly have dreamed that our children could have been abused and us not knowing. And we would never have suspected our son. Who would think of a son doing such a thing."

The fathers believed their children when they disclosed the abuse. They expressed wonderment at how it could have happened. This is understandable when seen in the context of being presented with a completely new and particularly disturbing occurrence. The initial incredulity was not directed toward the victim necessarily, but rather they found it hard to believe such a thing could happen to a member of their own families:

"We still shake our heads when we think about it. How could it happen? We know they're telling the truth. That's not at issue. It's just such a shock."

The father who himself had been abused as a child found it

easier to believe the abuse had occurred because of his prior experiences.

"Ya, I believed it right away. I had it done to me and I knew this guy had done it to kids before."

Thoughts

Another property of the fathers' initial reaction to the disclosure involves their attempt to make sense of the events occurring around them. When the victims disclosed the abuse it helped the fathers to understand some of the pre-disclosure behavior that had puzzled them and that they had searched for solutions to. The disclosure was in this way helpful as it cleared up speculation around disturbing behaviors:

"It was like the light went on. 'Oh ya, now it makes sense.' As much as you don't want to know or believe something like this could happen, when we finally found out we could then do something to help."

"Now, looking back, it explains a lot of things. The troubles my daughters had and are still having can be attributed, at least part way, to this abuse when they were young."

"My suspicions were right. But I still find it hard to accept."

The disclosure also contributed to thoughts of further threat to the victim and other children in the family. This coincides with the perception held by the fathers of their role as protector:

"You were more aware of abuse happening again after that. When we found out we decided to learn about it so we could help keep the other kids out of trouble."

"We sometimes wonder about his own kids. We love them all and, well, we keep our eyes open now."

The disclosure generated thinking around how to get help for the victim. The focus of the fathers' attention became getting help for their children:

"All I wanted to do was to get this guy some help because he was what was important to me."

"We immediately began calling to find out who could help her. That was my priority."

"I knew they would need counselling. I knew because of what I had gone through. Everything else could wait."

This experience relates to a second major theme which emerged: the process of regaining a sense of normalcy. Once the disruption had occurred in the fathers' role as protector, they tried to find help for the victim so as to regain the level of normal functioning experienced by the family before the disclosure of the sexual abuse.

Emotions

A variety of emotions made up another property of the fathers' experience of the disclosure of the abuse. Some of these emotions have persisted while others remained only for a short time after the disclosure. Shock, anger, fear, sadness, disappointment, and a sense of personal violation were emotions experienced by the fathers:

The shock has to do with the utter incredulity of the situation.

"Well, the first thing is you're shocked! We never knew about such things."

"I couldn't believe this could happen to one of my children."

The anger at the perpetrator was common.

"Now if I were in a room alone with him [offender] and there were no witnesses, there's a part of me that would just want to beat the living shit out of him, just for the hell of it."

The fathers experienced disappointment and a sense of helplessness at not being able to prevent the abuse. They were torn between loyalty to the victim and loyalty to the offender.

"You feel betrayed. Someone that you knew would do something like this."

The fear of the abuse occurring as well as of the repercussions on the victim and the family was evident in some cases. Again the need to protect was a strong element in the emotions expressed by the fathers. Anger at the offender who was not a member of the family persisted as did the sadness for the harm done to the victim. The fathers also experienced a sense of loss which included a loss of innocence for the victim and a loss of the dream of a happy life for the family:

"We really felt for the kids, what it was like for them, what they'd have to go through to get better, to recover."

"Everything has changed now. We have a major mountain to climb. I think we'll do it but this was a challenge I hadn't anticipated."

There was also a sense of relief as the fathers learned about the source of anxiety expressed by their children. This meant that they could move on in their role as problem-solver now that they began to understand what kind of help their children needed.

"It finally made sense. We still had to look for some help but we knew what we were up against. Finally we knew what was causing all this uproar."

Category 2: Changes in Relationships

This category involves relationships in the fathers' nuclear families, extended families, friends, and in the larger social systems. From the disclosure of the abuse on through to treatment of the victim and family, and beyond, fathers were interacting with many systems and subsystems. Many of these relationships were altered as a result of their child being abused.

Spouse

The first property to be examined in the fathers' experiences of changing relationships is within the marital dyad. The fathers experienced conflict with their spouses. The fathers identified how their responses to the disclosure of the abuse differed from their wives. This difference produced conflict. The fathers reported that because they weren't as demonstrative in their anger and grief around the abuse as their wives, they believed their wives were frustrated and angry with them:

"It pushed us apart for awhile because my wife didn't think I was angry enough."

"We moved apart for awhile, not different houses or anything, but there definitely was tension there because we looked at things differently."

"I guess I've been told by my wife that I'm different than other people. But I focused my emotions on trying to get some help....I guess that's where I was able to channel my anger toward that way. It caused a bit of a rift between my wife and myself because she was, you know, out for blood. And naturally because anyone we told, my friends or her friends, the male of the couple would say, 'I want to kill him! Where is he? How could he do this?!'. And my wife would react and say, 'Why don't you react that way? Why don't you want to kill him? He's your son.' I said, 'You've got to be realistic. What's done is done. What's the point. There's nothing you can do about it.'"

This difference in expression of emotions was compounded for the following fathers whose wives wanted them to act out retribution on the perpetrator:

"She was angry for a bit because I didn't go over to his house and get him. I don't go for revenge."

"And I think she had a lot of problems dealing the fact that I wasn't angry and I wasn't out for blood. I mean, sure I did. There were times I just wanted to choke the living hell out of this little kid [offender], but, like I say, I looked at the end result."

The fathers stated that they felt hurt when their wives reacted against them but all reported being able to resolve these feelings. They identified growing closer together as a result of learning more about how each other thinks and feels. Once they could accept that their differences were not right or wrong, but just different, they began to work together as a team to help the victim and family recover from the trauma:

"Our school has the program where it's a family-type unit and you all have to go in. It's participation. They work on the family aspect of things....And I think it helped her because the counsellor there was asking questions like, 'Why does he have to show it that way? What's wrong with the way he's showing it?' And I think that helped. Coming from somebody else it

helped her to understand that, 'Well, it's okay. He's dealing with it.'"

"And I think that we've come a long, long way. In some ways it's kind of strengthened us a lot tighter together than we would have been if this hadn't have happened. Because it's really made us look at our relationship and caused us to ask ourselves a lot of questions that we wouldn't have asked ourselves if this hadn't have happened....It's too bad it had to come about in this way."

This experience helped the fathers in the process of regaining a sense of normalcy.

The issue confronting the fathers was that they felt deep emotional stress, but they expressed these emotions differently from their wives. It points to the tremendous values that the husbands and their wives place on a particular way of showing emotions. In fact, the fathers talked about how this experience resulted in increased intimacy in their marital relationship. The fathers demonstrated that by beginning to accept differences in their partners, and having their partners do likewise, they were able to adjust to one another and resolve the conflict in their relationships.

Victim

The next property of the fathers' experiences concerned their changing relationship with the victim. The fathers expressed sadness toward their abused child for the trauma the child had experienced as well as the future consequences of the abuse on the child. They also experienced a heightened

sensitivity to the possibility of their behavior with the children being interpreted as sexual:

"I think you were a little more cautious of....I mean Robert and I always used to shower together. It was the only way I could get him to have a shower. But soon after that we made the rule that he was old enough now to have a shower and so on. We started to introduce a lot more of the privacy and shut the door and this kind of thing. It definitely heightened our sense to that area."

"It's taken us awhile to get comfortable with hugging and that. I think that's understandable. I kind of didn't know how much affection was good for them, how they would see it now."

"Initially I didn't think much of it then I started to think about how they might be interpreting my love for them."

The fathers generally tried to be open about talking about the abuse with the child, usually with the guidance of a counsellor. The abuse became a new context for their interactions with the child. As treatment progressed the fathers experienced their role as problem-solver in a new more significant way than they had in the past. Initially the abuse took the spontaneity out of their relationship with their child, however, this began to return as time went on.

A concern was that the abused child would become an offender. For one father, his relationship with his son was changed in that he had to become more aware of the boy's feelings around the abuse and potential hazardous conditions where his son could possibly abuse others as he got older:

"We tried to make the rule that if he was going to stay over at somebody's house then they had a right to know. We wanted them to understand Robert and we wanted them to protect Robert. Not to leave him in a

situation where there is the potential for him to do this to somebody else."

The father's role as protector could potentially be disrupted by his own son, the victim. Where the abuser was the brother of the child abused, the father wrestled with trying to support the victim without alienating the brother:

"They seem to understand that he is still a part of the family and we, as parents, love all of them. It's just hard knowing how to work that out."

Where the victim's behavior has become a problem (i.e. disobedience and acting out at home or school), the fathers found it easier not to be hurt or offended by the behavior, understanding that it was a result of the abuse. They felt that accepting the child and dealing with the behavior, though difficult, was manageable as they learned more about the effects of sexual abuse on a child:

"It's real tough putting up with some of the stuff sometimes but you have to understand where it's coming from."

"Then we could treat the behavior as opposed to the individual. And you had to differentiate that, because it's really easy when some kid is acting up and being a real brat to take your anger out on him. But you had to always kind of think, 'Well, wait a second.' Always think, 'Why is he doing this? I know why he's doing this.'"

The fathers experienced disappointment that the victim hadn't come to them and told them about the abuse immediately after it had happened:

"Why didn't he come to me? Did he think he would have gotten me upset? We could have dealt with it then, but he was so scared that we would have gotten angry at him, and that we wouldn't understand, and that we wouldn't listen to him. He wouldn't trust us."

"The other way would be a part of me got hurt when ...you believe in your heart that your child would tell you everything...it hurts you because you have this ideal that you're going to be buddy-buddy with him."

Other Children in the Family

It was important for the fathers to retain healthy relationships with the other children in the family. Although fathers experienced a sensitivity regarding the possible sexual interpretations of their actions toward these children, it did not appear to be problematic. What was of concern was the relationship between the victim and other children in the family:

"She became really mean and manipulating with the younger children and downright angry with her older brother."

"It has changed him. I don't think it's changed our reaction toward him. But again, they sleep in the same room, but we tend to get upset if we find that they've crawled into the same bed together. And make that a rule that they have their separate beds. And they don't sleep together."

Understandably, the fathers wanted to help keep the healthy, functioning components of family life intact. At the same time they wanted to keep the risk to these healthy relationships at a minimum. As none of the abuse cases went to court, the fathers did not have to protect their families from the effects of that ordeal. It did, however, affect their role as nurturers of their children.

Children in General

Another property of relationship change experienced by the fathers was with children in general. Though not an intense experience, they reported a heightened sensitivity of how their actions with other children might be interpreted. They stated that to some degree they had become less overtly affectionate with children and wary of placing themselves in possibly compromising situations:

"Oh, ya. I watch what I do with kids now and what other people do, too. I've seen what can happen with an accusation of abuse and I don't want to put myself or my family through that."

"You don't want to put yourself in a compromising position....You don't want to put that whole thing in motion [accusation of abuse]...it's like a machine."

Extended Family and Friends

When fathers chose to keep the abuse of their children hidden from family and friends, this did not prevent the abuse from affecting their relationships with these people. Questions about the victim's behavior or condition were euphemistically dismissed or answered in generalities or diverted away from any discussion of the abuse of the child:

"We don't talk about it with them. We want to protect [the child]. Besides, what good would it do for them to know."

One father, because he found it difficult to hide that the family was going for counselling and the victim's change of behavior needed to be explained, discussed the abuse with close family members:

"We decided to tell our folks because we felt they had a right to know and we knew we couldn't keep it from them. We told them we were seeing someone about his behavior problems."

As well, one father discussed the abuse with his family members to warn them of the potential risks of such things happening in the family:

"I wanted them to know what could happen, to be careful around kids and to watch out to protect their own kids."

Over all, there was a general loss of spontaneity in these relationships.

Offender

When fathers knew the person who had abused their children a loss of relationship with the offender occurred. Fathers whose sons had been the abuser perhaps suffered a major loss in that they saw themselves as needing to balance the concern for their child, the victim, with their loyalty toward their son, the abuser:

"When we found out he had been with her when they were young we weren't at all pleased. But what can you do now? We've talked with him about it....He's moved up the coast now. We don't see him as much."

"What can I do? He's my son. You get over being angry with him. We only talk briefly. I try to reach out to him. He doesn't come over any more."

This loss of relationship was also experienced by fathers who knew the offender even when the offender was a friend of the family:

"We knew his family. Their daughters played with our

kids. Now our relationship with them is destroyed. No, I never see him now."

"I haven't talked with him since. That's the end of it. He's not our friend any more, obviously."

Social Systems

Another property in the fathers' experiences was changes in their relationships to systems outside of their families. One father had to go to his employer to ask for time off to attend meetings and treatment sessions around his son's abuse:

"I was very fortunate to have a boss who understoodYou've got to be able to go to meetings and meet with a bunch of people."

Fathers also had to become familiar with social service agencies involved in the investigations and treatment around the abuse. These may be police, medical, child welfare and counselling agencies. Some of these may never have been in the fathers' spheres of influence before the abuse, but now they found themselves thrust into a foreign environment having to get to know and work with these agency officials. For the following father this was not a positive experience:

"I think that the one thing that really bothered me was that what they had to tell me up front didn't happen. Loss of credibility....They weren't even close...I don't have any time for them at all."

A positive experience with child protection workers was possible. The following father had an experience:

"Oh ya. They were great. They handled the situation well."

The relationships with more frequently contacted agencies such as schools or doctors' offices changed as the abuse changed the context of interactions with these people. For one father the victim's behavior at school became a frequent point of contact between him and the school principal:

"How many fathers can say they're on a first name basis with their son's principal?"

The fathers' experiences following the disclosure of their children's abuse occurred in the context of relationships. These relationships were also changed and in many cases losses occurred for the fathers.

Category 3: Self Issues

This category includes the properties of guilt and victimization.

Guilt

The fathers had some degree of difficulty in their perceptions that somehow they had failed to protect their children from this abuse. This sense of responsibility or guilt around the abuse varied from father to father:

"I wish I could have prevented it. But how could you, I mean, what could you have done before hand. We weren't even thinking about sexual abuse, let alone in our family."

"Ya, I should have known. But I thought he was over that. But what I hear now he's been into it all along, and now with my son. It's my own fault."

The degree of guilt appears to be related to the degree of prior knowledge of sexual abuse held by the father at the time his child was abused. For the father who himself had been abused and knew that the perpetrator of his child's abuse had previously offended, his was the most overt expression of guilt:

"It was my fault..."

Fathers could not help feeling responsible for the protection of their children and they expressed a sense of helplessness at not being aware of the sexual abuse at the time. There also appeared to be a sharing of this responsibility with their wives. This was apparent in their constant use of the pronoun, "we":

"It was so many years ago. It wasn't an issue back then. We should have been more aware but we weren't. I don't know how we could have prevented it given what we knew then."

Victimization

This second property of the self issues discussed by the fathers appeared more subtly in their statements, but was nonetheless present and lingering. The fathers felt that by their child having been abused, their own sense of control had been affected. As a member of the family, their lives had been severely interrupted and they had lost the stability of lifestyle they were experiencing before the disclosure of the abuse. Following disclosure, they had to go through the disruption of investigations and treatment. The victim's behavior change as a result of the abuse would add stress to

each father's relationship and alter his self-perception. The perpetrator had not only affected the life of the victim, but of the father and the rest of the family as well. Though not as overtly traumatic to the fathers as to the victims, the abuse still affected the fathers' lives significantly. A father could not control the circumstances completely after the disclosure. He was caught up in the flow of the post-disclosure processes as well:

"You knew that things would never be the same again. Sure we would recover, but I'm never going to be able to forget about what happened to my daughters. I'll try but I doubt it."

"This has really shaken me up. The whole process.... It's definitely changed me."

For the following father, the experience of the abuse of his children was a stark reminder of his own sexual victimization as a child. Although he was able to mobilize his efforts to help his children and the family as a whole, it was like he had once again been invaded vicariously through the abuse. This was a particularly difficult experience for this man for which a great deal of effort was necessary for him to work on unresolved issues of his own abuse.

"Ya, it was really hard for me. I had to get help, too. I was abused over a period of about 10 years. This brought a lot of it back. God, it was hard."

Category 4: The Process of Recovery

From the initial reaction of the fathers to the disclosure of the abuse, through the changes in relationships around them, to the development of internal issues that would develop over time, these men moved toward the goal of recovery. This process of getting themselves, the victims, and their families back to a semblance of how they were living before the abuse is the focus of this next category of the fathers' experience. It involves the process the fathers went through to recover a sense of normalcy for themselves and their families. After the disclosure, the goal expressed by these men was to help the victim, themselves, and the rest of their families overcome and resolve the difficulties produced by the trauma of the abuse. This category best illustrates the theme of regaining a sense of normalcy that appears throughout the fathers' experience, beginning with noticing the child's pre-disclosure behavior. The experience of the fathers was that the agencies supposedly set up to contribute to the recovery process actually hindered that process for their families. This is understandable as one realizes that agency mandates often differ. The police have a mandate to gather evidence that will lead to the arrest, prosecution, and conviction of the perpetrator. The child welfare agency has a mandate to prevent and lessen the impact of the sexual and/or physical abuse and neglect of children. Doctors work toward the physical and emotional well-being of

their patients. Counselling services offer help to individuals and families to resolve the negative effects of the trauma they experience and move on to a healthier level of functioning. The goals of a father may be to seek and obtain this treatment (to "get help") for the victim and the family. However, this goal may be frustrated by the other agencies involved in pursuit of the offender and protection of the children involved. This category includes finding resources, resolving guilt, and developing trust.

Finding Resources

The first property of this recovery process involved the fathers looking for help for the victims and their families. This may even have begun as a result of the pre-disclosure behavior:

"His behavior at school began to deteriorate til it became quite unbearable, unmanageable. And we were looking for solutions. We went through various channels....We finally ended up going to Children's Hospital and seeking one of the specialists there."

Once the disclosure had been made, looking for help became more specific:

"We began phoning around...to find out who worked with this stuff. We wanted to offer something to our kids."

"We got some names of doctors and counsellors who worked with sexual abuse."

"All I wanted to do was to get this guy [my son] some help because he was what was important to me."

The fathers found that the resources they were seeking primarily for the victims needed to be expanded to help resolve the conflicts developing in their marriages:

"My wife and I needed some work as well because we weren't getting along. I guess it was all the stress. You lose your ability to cope for awhile."

"I think it was when we started going together, when Robert got out of his school and when we started going to Kincaid [special school]. Kincaid has the program where it's a family-type unit . . . it's participation And I think then we started coming back closer and started working together Because it really made us look at our relationship."

"You need that third party. I never believed in marriage counselling and all this B.S. I thought it was a lot of 'hooey'. But I believe in it now."

The fathers stressed the need to have their spouses as resources to cope with the stress of trying to resolve the difficulties of the abuse:

"I don't think I could have kept it together without us working on our own stuff."

"You need to work as a team. One person can't do it all."

Counselling agencies served a number of purposes and appeared to be the primary goal for fathers in seeking help for their children. But the therapeutic function of the counselling was not the only important element. Education about sexual abuse and its effects on the victims and other family members was equally as, or more important than the "therapy":

"I guess the counsellor's involvement here and teaching us about the emotions and basically spelling out to us what we had on our hands, and how we had to deal with it....You just don't understand sometimes."

"It really helped to learn about the dynamics of sexual abuse. It's not a pleasant topic but the more you know the more you can do to help. That's the whole point."

One father found that changing to a school which specialized in treating sexually abused children helped both the victim and the family:

"It really took him and made him feel worthwhile againThey work on the family aspect of things, which I think is important. As well as how you're coping with your child."

It appears that if the resources available to the fathers matched the fathers' expectations and desires to help the victims, the fathers were relieved and felt favourably about the resources. If the agencies appeared to frustrate the fathers' goals, they found this an understandable difficulty. One father who found the police and child protection officials helpful said:

"They were great. We felt we were being protected and they were getting this guy away from the kids."

However, another father had a different experience:

"Oh ya, the MHR and the police....I don't have any time for them at all....They had no idea what they were dealing with. They have no perception of what you're going through....You've got to go through it. Then and only then can you get [your child] some help."

Another father had particular problems with both his child's doctor and counsellor:

"We've been trying to get some information but it's been like a curtain has been drawn between us."

The process of finding resources to meet the various needs experienced by these fathers was a mixture of helpful and

difficult occurrences, that were often complex and lengthy as well. Finding help for the internal issues they had to deal with also varied with each man.

Resolving Guilt

This second property of the recovery process involved the fathers coming to some resolution about the degree of guilt they experienced in not being able to protect their children from the abuse. This resolution came over time as they accepted a certain degree of helplessness to have prevented the abuse. Because of their lack of knowledge about sexual abuse, its risks and consequences, and the secret, coercive circumstances the abuse occurs under, these men were able to release themselves of some of the responsibility for not preventing the abuse. Some responsibility was acknowledged which the men could live with:

"In hindsight you can always see clearer. But we've got to get on with getting better."

"I'm not sure what good it would do to blame myself. I just didn't have a clue back then."

The following father, however, had a more difficult time in resolving his sense of guilt:

"I should have known better. I figured he had changedIt's still hard for me but what can I do now.... What's done is done."

Seeking help for the victims and their families appeared to help reinstate the fathers as protectors once again and also helped them feel better about themselves as problem-solvers and nurturers in their families.

Developing Trust

An important component of the recovery process for the fathers was in regaining a sense of trust in themselves and the world around them. After such a traumatic event, the whole world can appear to be a threatening place for the fathers and their families. Their expectations about how people relate to them had been radically contravened. This was true especially in their relationships with the perpetrators but had been generalized to a degree to almost everyone. As the men began to regain a sense of control over their lives and the lives of their families, and began to understand what to expect in the way of consequences from the abuse, they began to be able to perceive the world as less of a threat. Life could be trusted to act more predictably than it appeared in the tumultuous times following disclosure of the abuse:

"You begin to wonder about who else you know who might be a sexual abuser. But after a while you learn more about what's going on and you can do something about protecting your kids."

For each of these men this process of regaining trust continues throughout the entire process of recovery. One thing is certain; their lives will never be the same. From initially learning of the abuse to regaining a sense of normalcy, each of these fathers has had a radical change of his world to cope with. Their experiences in relation to the sexual abuse of their children are continuing to grow.

The sexual abuse of a child is a drastic affront to a

father's perception of his role as the protector of his children. He must deal with his own responsibility of failing to protect his child from being abused while at the same time work to regain a sense of normalcy in his family by seeking treatment and justice, i.e. to reverse the effects of the abuse on his family. These two themes emerge as his life was disrupted and he sought to repair the damage.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter will discuss the limitations of this study as well as questions for future research. Further to this, an attempt will be made to integrate the findings of this study with existing findings in the literature. Finally, some implications for social work will be explored.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is the limited number of subjects interviewed. However, the generality of the concepts obtained from these four fathers' experiences is such that application can be made over a wide variety of situations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). What is important is developing conceptual clarity about the experience of fathers within a context. This can be achieved with only a few interviews and from there the process of examining the topic in greater detail begins. Though these men were from a single geographic area, which happens to be relatively rich in social service resources, their personal backgrounds are varied enough so as to add to the composite picture developed. Ethnically, one father was of Hispanic descent, one was East Indian descent, and the other two were Caucasian who grew up locally. It would be advantageous in

further research to explore if experiences varied with different ethnic, age, professional, and geographic characteristics.

Another limitation could be seen as the retrospective design of the study. It is likely that the perceptions of the men's earlier experiences have changed over time. However, this could also be interpreted as a strength in that the men have all had time to reflect on their experiences, gain information which would allow them to put their experiences in clearer perspective, and integrate their experiences into a cohesive whole. This allowed the men to have experiences of not only the initial crisis period but of the treatment and recovery process as well. All of the men articulated their experiences well which may indicate a level of distance from the initial pain allowing for more subtle internal experiences to surface. These might have been blocked out if the men were interviewed too soon after the disclosure of the abuse.

The bias of the researcher could be seen as a limitation as only one person has conducted the interviews and analysed the data. Another researcher might have derived different categories or valued certain statements more highly. This, however, will hopefully be accounted for as more research is conducted and gradually integrated to give a more complete picture of the effects of child sexual abuse on non-offending fathers.

Another limitation is the time-consuming nature of the analysis which must include making transcripts and selecting

codes for statements made by each subject. These codes must then be merged into categories and categories merged into themes. The number of hours necessary to adequately analyse data provided by only four subjects can be intimidating to the researcher. However, the costs of conducting qualitative research are necessary if one wishes to begin to explore new areas of study.

Questions For Future Research

Further research into the experiences of non-offending fathers could take a number of dictions. It could be hypothesized that experiences would differ depending on who the perpetrator was, the type of abuse that occurred and the length of time between the abuse occurring and the time the father learned of the abuse. Expending some effort to look into these areas in more depth could provide clinicians with valuable information about how fathers differ in their experiences based on these variables. This would in turn lead to a more focused intervention.

It was interesting to note that of all of the agencies contacted providing services for sexual abuse victims, only one had non-offending fathers in treatment. A study to find out the number of non-offending fathers involved in treatment, including why the agency chose to involve them or, conversely, not to involve them would lead to useful information about these men's

roles in helping the victim. If the men were not involved in treatment, does this represent a non-systemic bias on the part of the agency, or a lack of cooperation on the part of the fathers, or both?

It appears that the fathers in this study may have benefited from exposure to crisis events in the past. Does previous success in resolving crises influence a father's ability to resolve the difficulties brought on by the abuse of his child? Again, this information may help clinicians anticipate directions to move in the treatment of these issues.

Perhaps it would be helpful to follow these men longitudinally to explore the progress they make in resolving their difficulties over time. It would also be interesting to ask the fathers, in hindsight, how they think the abuse could have been prevented, and get a clearer understanding of their sense of responsibility for the abuse. As well, they could be monitored to see how this sense of responsibility is resolved within them, or to see if it lingers as a personal issue for them over time.

Integration of Findings With Literature

Charles (1987) found that when looking at the experiences of non-offending mothers, these experiences are "best viewed as a process, rather than a static event" (p. 62). The experiences of non-offending fathers develop over time from the initial

shock at the disclosure of the abuse, through the process of finding help for the family, to regaining a sense of normalcy. The four categories overlapped somewhat. The father's initial reaction to the disclosure may isolate him from others in his family. His relationships change as a result, hindering the recovery process and leading to prolonged stress in dealing with his self issues. Like the Charles study, these men were profoundly affected in their perception of their role as protector. Unlike non-offending mothers in an incest situation, these men did not appear to experience the same degree of guilt and self-doubt around not preventing the abuse. This could be a defence mechanism on the part of the men, or more probably, a different way of viewing responsibility. At this point it is unclear how much of this perception is a gender difference or attributed to the different perception of role perceived by the fathers than by mothers. Another characteristic which could account for the different perception of responsibility is that in the case of these four fathers, they were in significantly less intimate relationships with the offenders than were the mothers in the Charles study. The fathers would then feel less responsibility for having known what the offender was doing.

Along this line, the fathers in the present study did not experience the same degree of divided loyalties as did the mothers in the Charles study (1987). Though the fathers felt some loss at the offender's breach of trust, they were not as upset by the loss of relationship. This is understandable when

one considers the investment in intimacy with a spouse versus that with a son, acquaintance, or baby-sitter, though the losses felt by fathers whose sons had offended were acute.

Compared with the Regehr (1988) study, these men in the present study expressed similar feelings of guilt around not protecting their children. However, they did not appear to experience that guilt as intensely as the men reported by Regehr. As well, the fathers did not experience the same degree of guilt for causing the offender so much trouble as did the men in the Regehr study. This could be accounted for in that the men in the present study were reporting their experiences far longer "after the fact" than those in Regehr's study and would have had time to weigh their experiences and integrate them more with new learning about responsibility.

In terms of father role (Lynn, 1974), the fathers experienced the most disruption in their perception of their role as protector. Though they did not feel extremely guilty, they did experience much frustration. Regarding their role as nurturers, the men found that they had, at least for the time since the abuse until being interviewed, experienced some losses around no longer being free to be affectionate with their children. As problem-solvers, these men appeared to be quite successful in their expectations of helping their families through the trauma of the abuse. It is perhaps ironic that this emphasis on problem-solving rather than on overt expression of emotion at the initial disclosure phase contributed to conflict

between them and their wives. This became an area of hurt for the men but also an area of successful problem-solving as those relationships were restored, even improved.

Unlike many fathers, especially when the perpetrator is not known, these men were not aware of being put under suspicion for having committed the abuse. As much of the literature refers to offending fathers (Finkelhor, 1986), the men in the present study would certainly have been at risk of suspicion if the offender had not been initially identified.

It is clear that the abuse of their children produced profound effects on these men. It is perhaps alarming that, even with the number of celebrated child abuse cases perpetrated by teachers, clergy, and other care-givers recently in this province, there does not appear to be an emphasis in including non-offending fathers in the treatment. Some agencies insist that mothers participate in treatment with their children but apparently the same value is not placed on treatment for non-offending fathers (Patterson, 1988). If the results of this study are any indication, non-offending fathers not only have profound issues for themselves to resolve, but they are inextricably connected to the healing process for the victims and the rest of their families.

Social Work Implications

Prior to this study little was known about the experiences of non-offending fathers of sexually abused children. What is apparent now is that the abuse of a child is a profoundly traumatic event for fathers. With this in mind, the implications of this study for social work practice will be discussed.

The lack of information on the effects of child sexual abuse on the non-offending fathers is remarkable. It is disturbing to think that this may be reflected in a lack of awareness at the practice level of the impact of this trauma on fathers. The first clear implication for social work practice is that, whether at the child protection level or the treatment level, social workers need to be aware of and sensitive to the effects of child sexual abuse on fathers. This emphasizes the need for a larger systemic view of crisis events on families which may mean social service agency mandates may have to be broadened to incorporate a larger view. Social workers will have to assess fathers who may not only have been affected profoundly by the abuse of their children, but who will also be a valuable and necessary component in the successful treatment of the victims and their families. Based on the fathers' statements, child welfare agencies should be training their front line workers to conduct their investigations in a more consistent, professional manner. Lack of staffing may be a

major problem. Over-worked social workers find themselves in a difficult position to conduct their case work thoroughly. An increased number of social workers may be needed to ensure that sexual abuse investigations are handled professionally and with sensitivity to the needs of the victim's family.

In terms of the policies of treatment agencies, the results of this study compel social workers to require non-offending fathers be included in treatment. If theoretical bias has in any way excluded these fathers from treatment, responsible social workers must rethink their theoretical frameworks because it is undeniable that a non-offending father is an integral part of a family where child sexual abuse has occurred. According to the experiences of the fathers, agencies possessing these biases must change their policies to include non-offending fathers.

As the protector role was central in these fathers' experiences, it is necessary to include more education for parents to understand how to better protect their children against sexual abuse. Based on the fathers' comments, the need is for information on the risk areas where sexual abuse may occur, alternatives for parents who find their children are at risk, information on the types and consequences of sexual abuse, and warning signs that a child may have been abused so the child will not continue to be at risk. As well, information about how perpetrators operate would help in prevention. Whether this happens through parents associations in schools, through the

mass media, or in some other way, social workers must press for help for parents to be better able to protect their children.

For social workers, working with non-offending fathers, as their experiences are just a small part of a very large social problem in our society, more information is needed to increase skill levels to be better able to assist the fathers of victims of child sexual abuse and their families. The fathers suggested that social service professionals be taught more about the ripple effect of the trauma of child sexual abuse into the rest of the victim's family. They should be trained to help the family members with their difficulties around the abuse, through individual, couples, family, and group work.

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APPENDIX A

Date

Contact Person
Agency Name
and Address

Dear Contact Person,

I am a graduate student in Social Work at U.B.C. and will be conducting a research study on "Experiences of Non-Offending Fathers of Sexually Abused children". The study will take place from January to June, 1988. Much is being written on child sexual abuse. A noticeable gap in the literature exists relative to what non-offending fathers experience when one or more of their children are abused. In working with families, it is important to understand what the difficult issues are for fathers in order not to neglect their needs in the therapeutic process. It is hoped that by systematic observation of their experiences that this study will lead to better treatment for fathers and their families after a child has been abused.

The study will consist of a series of 1 to 1 1/2 hour video-taped interviews (one interview per respondent). These interviews will take place at the Family Practice Unit at U.B.C. where I am working as a family therapist. If this location is not convenient, the interview can be taped elsewhere. The interviews will be transcribed and then erased. To protect confidentiality, at no time will the subject's name, address or phone number appear on any of the research material.

I am writing to request any referrals of men who are non-offending fathers of sexually abused children. If they consent to the interview, they are free to withdraw at any time, or to refuse to answer any of the questions. Any such choice will in no way jeopardize further treatment or services they are currently receiving.

Working through the trauma following a sexual abuse can be both difficult and painful. During the interview, strong emotions may be aroused in the subject. These can either be addressed as they arise or with his therapist. The subject may also discuss the interview with the interviewer after it has ended. The participants will be asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview and will receive a copy of the consent form.

APPENDIX BINTERVIEW GUIDEPART I

1.
 - a) Who is in your family? (basic genogram information)
 - b) Which child was abused?
 - c) When did the abuse occur?
 - d) What was the nature and the duration of the abuse?
2.
 - a) How did you initially hear about the abuse of your child?
 - b) What were you told?
 - c) What was your initial response to this? (probe for thoughts, feelings, actions)
3. Has the disclosure and what you know about the abuse affected your relationship with the abused child? How so?
4.
 - a) Has all of this affected your relationships with the other children in the family? How so?
 - b) Has all of this affected your relationships with other children in general? How so?
5. Has all of this affected your relationship with your wife? How so?
6. Has all of this affected the other children in the home? How so?
7. Has all of this affected the relationships of the other children in the home with the abused child? How so?
8. Has all of this affected your ideas about being a father? (probe for sense of responsibility and protectiveness)
Prompt: "Some fathers feel very protective toward their children while others feel that a child's independence is more important."
9.
 - a) Have you done anything to try to help the abused child overcome this difficult event? What have you done?
 - b) Have you done anything to try to help the rest of the family overcome this difficult event? What have you done?
10. If you know the person who committed the abuse, has your relationship with offender changed since you learned of the abuse? How so? (probe for conflicting loyalties)

11. a) Is there anything that you have found particularly helpful as you have tried to cope with this event?
b) Is there anything that you have found particularly difficult as you have tried to cope with this event? (probe re different services/agencies encountered, history of own/spouse's abuse, suspected of being the offender)
12. If you had to go through this again, is there anything you would do differently?
13. What suggestions would you give other men faced with similar experiences?
14. We have talked a lot about your experiences today. Are there any areas that have not been discussed that you would like to mention?

PART II

After interview completion, the following demographic/background data will be gathered if not raised in the discussions of PART I:

1. Amount of time since father first learned of the abuse.
2. Age and gender of all children in the family.
3. Age of mother and father.
4. Relationship of offender to the victim: sibling, extended family member, acquaintance, stranger, other.
5. Family's economic status:
 - a) gross family income: under \$30,000 per year, \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year, over \$50,000 per year.
 - b) type of work mother and father do.
6. Status of the offender: identified? charged? appeared in court? in jail? accepted/denied responsibility? in treatment?

APPENDIX CPRE-INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

Many fathers find the sexual abuse of their child a difficult experience. Talking about your experience with me may bring back some painful feelings. To some fathers, talking about their child's abuse and what that was like for them as a father also brings up painful experiences from their own childhood. It may be difficult to talk about that, or your own fears and hurts. Please try to talk about all of the things you experienced after learning that your child was sexually abused. It is important that we learn as much as possible about what fathers go through during these times. I'll be asking you some questions to guide the interview, but please be as honest and as complete in your answers as you can be.

in recording your responses. The tape will be transcribed into written form and the tape erased.

If you consent to the interview, you are free to withdraw at any time or to refuse to answer any of the question. Any such choice will in no way jeopardize further treatment or services at the Family Practice Unit or at any agency where you are now receiving treatment. This interview will take 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

As you are probably aware, working through the trauma following a sexual abuse can be both difficult and painful. During the interview, strong emotions may be aroused in you. These can either be addressed as they arise or with your therapist. You may also discuss the interview with the interviewer after it has ended.

Please indicate your formal consent to being interviewed and to the utilization of the interview material for the above-noted research project. Your signature also acknowledges your receipt of a copy of the consent form.

Signature (father) _____

Signature (interviewer) _____

Date _____

APPENDIX GTRANSCRIPT OF SAMPLE INTERVIEW

I: = Interviewer

F: = Father

I: I have about a page and a half of questions - Interviewer
so I don't think it should take longer than explanation
about an hour. All right?

F: Sure.

I: First of all, if I can just ask you who's - Identification
in your family?

F: My wife, Carol. - Members of the
family

I: Carol? Okay.

F: And Robert is the eldest.

I: Robert?

F: Yes. R-O-B-E-R-T (spelling the name) and
the youngest is Henry.

I: How old are they? - Ages

F: Henry just turned four - February 10th, and
Robert will be nine in May.

I: And how old are you?

F: I'm thirty-three, just turned.

I: And your wife?

F: Thirty-five. Thirty-four actually. I
always tell her she's two years older
(smiling).

I: Now, which of the children was abused?

F: Robert.

I: Robert was. Okay. And when did that occur?

F: Um...that would be...I guess we, we cottoned on to it about two years ago, so, two and a half years ago, but actually it would be when he was around five.

- Uncertainty re disclosure
- Time of abuse

I: All right. And, can you tell me the nature and the duration of the abuse?

F: From what we understand it was a baby-sitter, a male babysitter. He hasn't gone to a total disclosure so we're not sure as to the exact extent. So it could be anywhere from fondling to buggery. Although he did have some indication that it could have been some anal penetration because his anus was raw. He does have some warts on his anus that reoccur when he gets emotionally upset. But we're not 100% sure.

- Abuser
- Uncertainty re disclosure
- Type of abuse
- Uncertainty

I: One night or on a number of occasions?

F: Again, we're not 100% sure but I would say at least twice. Some people seem to think there was more occurring and some think it was a one shot deal. So we're not 100% sure.

- Extent of abuse
- Uncertainty

I: And how did you initially hear about the abuse of Robert?

F: Um...you know I really don't remember. His behavior at school began to deteriorate til it became quite unbearable, unmanageable. And we were looking for solutions. We went through various channels to find out what was wrong with the boy and what ...was there allergy problems and so on. And I really forget...even when we noticed the rash on his backside we took him to the allergy specialist. She just said it was a reaction to soup. So we treated that. I forget. I honestly don't remember how we came to decide this might be what it is.

- Pre-disclosure
- behavior change
- search for understanding
- help-seeking
- search for theory/ understanding
- uncertainty
- uncertainty re discovery of abuse

- F: And we were in a lot of doubt for about a year. We finally ended up going to Children's Hospital and seeking one of the specialists there. And he confirmed that there was no question. And we took it from there. But no, if we were sitting around and Robert exhibited some behavior we didn't just say, "This is from sexual abuse." No, we didn't know.
- time re disclosure process
 - helpseeking
 - Suspicions confirmed/disclosure
 - uncertainty re meaning of abuse
- I: So you learned it over a period of time. Then did he disclose to a degree what happened?
- F: He had disclosed to other people, like doctors, but he never really disclosed it to us. We had to basically tell him we knew what it was and understood, then he would say a little bit. And even when he would disclose a little bit - it was half of a story he was telling. And he would only tell this half and that's all. And he would tell perfectly four sections about one night when Bennie was baby-sitting. I left, they put stickers on a model, he went to bed, he came in and touched me. And that's all. That's it. He wouldn't say anymore. And we knew it was more than that. Um, I'm still trying to think of your first question about when did we know. I honestly don't know. My wife would know better than me.
- I: What was your initial response to when you first came to understand the abuse had happened?
- Difference in response
- wife's perception of husband's response
- F: I guess I've been told by my wife that I'm different than other people. But I focused my emotions on trying to get some help. Because all I could see was that I had a child that was behaviorally he was out of control. I really didn't concern myself with the reasons why.
- emotions not identified
 - action was important
 - helping behavior
- Disclosure made to ?
- Father's disclosure behavior
 - Kid's disclosure pattern
 - Kid's disclosure pattern
 - Parent's anxiety re half story
 - Uncertainty re time

F: All I wanted to do was to get some help for this boy. Whether it was sexual abuse that was causing it, or whether it was a mental problem that he had, or whether it was the way we brought him up, I didn't care at that point. What I wanted to do was to rectify the situation or to start some action toward rectifying the situation. I guess that's where I was able to channel my anger toward that way. It caused a bit of a rift between my wife and myself because she was, you know, out for blood. And naturally because anyone we told, my friends or her friends, the male of the couple would say, "I want to kill him! Where is he? How could he do this!" And my wife would react and say, "Why don't you react that way? Why don't you want to kill him? He's your son." I said, "You've got to be realistic. What's done is done. What's the point. There's nothing you can do about it."

Frankly, I couldn't be concerned if that kid got help. That's a very selfish attitude, but tough! All I wanted to do was to get this guy some help because he was what was important to me.

- uncomfortable/ confused re child's behavior
- helping more important than knowledge of origin of behavior
- Uncertainty re cause
- speculation
- Goal - to regain "normal"/ balance
- Emotion: Anger
- energy to motivate for action
- Conflict re different approach
- Wife's expectations
- husband should be like friends
- Guilt
- Coping behavior
- different priorities
- contempt for abuser
- Values getting help over revenge

I: In terms of what you actually did at that time when you first learned about it, you say you channeled that into going for help. What did you do exactly?

F: Every way we went, I think we went to the Mental Health in Port Coquitlam and they said, "This is sexual abuse. We can't

Help-seeking

help you. You have to go see MHR." We went to the doctor, Gibson, and Dr. Gibson said, "This is sexual abuse and immediately I know this I have to report this to MHR. So you have to do the same. What will happen is you will go to MHR. They will do the stuff. They will report it to the police. The police will do all the .." He gave me a big long story about exactly what would happen. But all of this had to happen before we could get Robert into counselling, before we could get Robert some help. And I was really upset about that because I thought, like, "Why isn't the option ours?" We've got a seven year old boy, or a six year old boy - I really don't remember the age - and he's making a statement.

Frustration at goal being thwarted
Negative experience with agencies
Frustration re delay
Rationale for alternatives
Reaction to reporting
- uncertainty
Loss of control of problem-solving process

F: Now it occurred to me that there was enough evidence to suggest that children don't lie about this sort of thing. But there was enough doubt, or there was some doubt that maybe there was something that was taken the wrong way, that there was a chance he was substituting somebody else as opposed to Bennie, the baby-sitter. And I thought, "Am I going to open myself up to a libel suit or am I going to ruin somebody else's life because my six year old son wants to make an accusation?" Now, that's why I say that basically I wasn't there, I didn't see it. I don't have any proof. Obviously you're going to have a six year old child and you're going to have a sixteen year old boy. Who is more credible? So why dwell on this? This kid needs help now.

Reasons for not reporting
- not therapeutic
- blocking help
- only a hoop to jump through

I: So you wanted to go for counselling.

Priorities/goals

F: I wanted to get this guy some help. I really didn't care at that point how he got into this state. I just wanted him to get some help because he was hurting really bad.

Sympathy re son's pain

I: So was that the focus of what you were doing?

F: So I was angry that I had to go to MHR, that we had to get the police involved, that you were talking about a kid who was the altar boy at the local Anglican Church, who was for all intents and purposes the model all-Canadian boy, who we knew their family, who the sisters played with Robert and that's how we got to know them. I was seeing all these relationships destroyed and all I wanted to do was get this kid some help. And as it turned out we planned it so that we would say that after Christmas we would notify MHR, then we would go through the whole stream. That whole experience in my seeking was just a farce. And it's something that I am still angry about. I guess I don't know really where the fault lies: whether it's a funding problem or whether it's an education problem. But right from MHR, the stuff they told us didn't happen. They were supposed to send a police officer with anatomically correct dolls to interview Robert along with the social worker who we saw that night. Then they were going to go and surprise the boy and make the accusation or tell him this had been said and try to get some reaction to see if anything happened. Frankly, I think that at that point in time I had more experience on the subject than he did.

Anger re delay
Abuser good reputation
 - known to the father
 - relationship between two families
Loss of relationships
 - unnecessary for goal of helping son.
Plan taking some control of timing
Anger re expectations of reporting/ control process not met.
Looking for explanation
 - uncertainty re problem with MHR
 Understanding of process of confronting abuser - police
 Perceive police to be not well-trained

I: Uniformed officer?

F: No. He was a plain-clothes man. But I'm sure that he was just giving out a speeding ticket before he came to the door. He didn't really know what he was supposed to be doing. He didn't offer that kind of a ...he wasn't trained to handle it, in my opinion. MHR person didn't show up. He was supposed to go there to the person's house. He would surprise the person.

Sarcasm re perception of police
Reaction to police
 Contempt re ability
Disappointment re expectations not met

F: Anyway, we were sitting on pins and needles waiting on what was going to happen. I had to finally phone somebody to find out what the scoop was. The policeman phoned me back. Then he said he got hold of this boy and brought him down and questioned him and in their opinion he was a well-adjusted child. Now my wife knew his mother who had told my wife that he was having trouble in school. The counsellors in school didn't want to deal with him because he was a pathological liar and that he would lie so well that they said counselling wasn't a problem. And I've got a cop telling me that he's a well-adjusted child. I thought, "I don't really care at this stage. You can take your phone and stick it where the sun don't shine. But thanks for your efforts because now I can get my child some help." Because I've got through all of this bullshit.

Anxiety re waiting for outcome/
uncertainty
Taking control for information re confronting abuser
Police perception of abuser different from wife's.
Abuser - fooling professionals in the past
Contempt toward police
Anger/
Frustration
Relief re finally able to get son some help.
Anger at the delay

I: So the requirement before you could get him into counselling was that...

F: MHR, the police, and then you can go for counselling. And it didn't matter what these two decided. It didn't matter a damn whether they thought your child was full of it or whether he was innocent.

Anger that delay happened regardless of outcome of investigation

I: It just had to be reported and the process had to go through..

F: And I couldn't understand that. And it turned out that apparently they went around to the house but there was nobody there. So then he phoned and said like this accusation has been made against your son and we need to talk to him. And the father said, "He's playing tennis. I'll go and get him."

Police process Outcome inconsistent with initial expectations

- F: "No problem. Bring him down tomorrow." I thought, "Well, so that's a 'surprise'." He said, "No, I'll bring him down right now." So he went right down with his father. And then of course they came over. His mother is a fairly educated woman and has dealt with this subject before in her education. And she sat there and said, "I thought children don't lie about this thing." But she was having difficulty rationalizing why her son would have done something like this. And her son came over that night, too. It was funny because he keyed in on exactly what Robert had said. Almost like, "How much has he told you?: But he never said, "Why would he say something like that?" He never once said, "I thought Robert was my friend."
- I: Did anything happen with the prosecution? Were there charges laid?
- F: No. So again I said, "Well that's fine."
- I: Did the disclosure affect your relationship with Robert?
- F: Yeah, to a large degree. Because then we started to learn what these kids are going through. And it's really difficult to try and understand. You hear about rape victims and you try and put it in your mind and say, "How would that feel if that happened to me?" But you have no idea what kind of emotions they're dealing with. And it was only through getting involved and talking with people like Ray and getting into a few of the details, and reading as much literature as you could, that you begin to understand what emotions cause what behavior. And it's almost like the behavior was the key to me.
- Parents of abuser contact victim's family Abuser's mother's incredulity. Father's perception that abuser's response was consistent with having done the abuse.
- No prosecution. Appears not to mind
- Gaining understanding - difficult Unable to identify with victim Problem-solving around need to understand Connecting child's emotions with behavior

- F: And if there was any kind of a sexual abuse education program, you could forget about "no touching and no feeling" and safeguarding your child, because that doesn't work in my opinion. You can do that til you're blue in the face. And I think you'll hear that's fairly common. But if you think your child is streetproof, and you test him, he'll end up going with somebody, and he'll end up in a car. And he forgets all of those things because he's a kid. The thing to watch is the behavior. If your child all of a sudden starts exhibiting weird behavior then that's what you should key in on.
- I: You learned more about your son as a result of this?
- F: Oh ya! Then we could treat the behavior as opposed to the individual. And you had to differentiate that, because it's really easy when some kid is acting up and being a real brat to take your anger out on him. But you had to always kind of think, "Well, wait a second." Always think, "Why is he doing this. I know why he's doing this."
- I: Did it affect how you played with him, your affection with him? That sort of stuff?
- F: That's an interesting point, because...Ya, I think you did. I think you were a little more cautious of ...I mean Robert and I always used to shower together. It was the only way I could get him to have a shower. But soon after that we made the rule that he was old enough now to have a shower and so on. We started to introduce a lot more of the privacy and shut the door and this kind of thing. It definitely heightened our sense to that area. But I don't think the affection part of it...no I still...you did kind of think ...like I used to smack him on the bottom whenever I could get a chance of seeing some...I'd always give him a little tap. And you did kind of wonder, "Oh, geez..."
- Not being able to protect child
Perception that prevention is next to impossible
After-the-fact behaviors are impetus for action.
- More tolerant of child/ less angry - behaviors have causes
- Change in father's physical touching of child.
- not showering together
- increase sense of privacy in child
- Rules for safety
Increased sensitivity to sexually relevant issues

I: Like, second-guess yourself?

F: Ya. You know, I wonder how you'd take that. I wonder how that would affect him. It was always a playful thing. Ya, it did. Because it does affect him. And the trust aspect, too. Who do you trust your kids with? That affected us a lot. We tried to make the rule that if he was going to stay over at somebody's house then they had a right to know. We wanted them to understand Robert and we wanted them to protect Robert. Not to leave him in a situation where there is the potential for him to do this to somebody else. Because there is this...you have to realize he has crossed this line into adult sexuality and he doesn't know how to handle it. So you have to realize that you are protecting their children but you are protecting him as well. So there was always that kind of wondering. We'd throw out little questions when he came back from someone's house or he'd go to Cub camp. You couldn't prevent him from doing anything but you could be aware of it.

I: Has this affected your relationship with your other son?

F: Yes, to some degree, because we're making him a little bit more sensitive and more aware of these aspects at a much earlier age. He's going to see the counsellor every week. So he's learning about "good feelings" and "bad feelings" and "private parts" and all these things. At four years old Robert never learned that. So to some degree. And the same kind of things. You just notice that he's a little more aware of the privacy aspect. I noticed the other day that he was shutting the door going to the bathroom. He's four years old. And he makes a point of it. And I said to Carol,

Uncertainty as to effects of patting child's bum

Uncertainty re who to trust with children

Rules for safety
Fear of child becoming abuser

Understanding of potential to become abuser

Uncertainty

Increased scrutiny of child's possible abuse of others

Role - instruct other son re sexual issues

Goal - to prevent further abuse

How this is different from experience with abused son
Younger son already applying new learning

F: "That's unusual." And she said, "Well, no. He's been learning that with Ray." It has changed him. I don't think it's changed our reaction toward him. But again, they sleep in the same room, but we tend to get upset if we find that they've crawled into the same bed together. And make that a rule that they have their separate beds. And they don't sleep together.

Safeguarding by parents

Rules for safety

I: And what's your concern there?

F: Just that Robert might do something. Because I don't think that you can be 100% sure. Just for his own safety because he doesn't know how to deal with this yet. He's still a kid. There's a part of him that says, "Gee, that was nice. That was good." But there's a part of him that says, "That was bad." And there's a part of him that says, "Why should it only be me. Why can't this happen to somebody else, like my brother." And you have to be aware of that. And we talk about it with him. We ask him, "How would you feel if this happened?" Not that he would do it. But, "How would you feel if this happened to your brother? And how would you feel if this happened to somebody else that you know? And it's happened to you and it's happened to a lot of other people but you're dealing with it now." But it's going to take a long time before he is adult and mature enough to grasp that. So you've got to try and safeguard in the meantime and put up the barriers.

Uncertainty re son becoming an abuser

Perception of abused son's experience
- possibility of abusing others

Safeguarding behavior: talk about possibility of abusing with son

Uncertainty re son's ability to understand potential for abuse

- reason for safeguarding

I: Has all of this affected your relationship with other children in general?

F: Yes. It has actually. And it's funny, because I have a friend of mine who doesn't know Robert was abused. He's a cub leader. And he was saying that when they go out on Beaver camp he makes damn sure that there's another leader with him at all times because he's frightened that something

Perception of change re other children
Experience of friend re sensitivity to accusation of

F: will happen or one of the kids will say, "You did this." or whatever. He's fearing the other. Ya. You do get affected. And I can only give you a for-instance. There's two little girls across the street. I guess their ages would be five and three roughly. And they always play with the boys. Robert and Henry go over there and Betty and Lisa come over to our place and so on and so forth. And there have been occasions where I have been looking after the boys when Carol has been out shopping, and Robert and Henry will bring Betty and Lisa over. And it does go through your mind, "My God, here I am with these four children. Two of these are girls. How would it be?" And I generally try and push them outside or go outside and play with them.

abuse
Identifying with
friend

Fear re
accusations of
abuse: example
of children who
play with his
sons
Not wanting to
be vulnerable to
accusation of
abuse
Safeguarding re
own
vulnerability to
accusation

I: You mean, what would people think about that?

F: Well ya. Or it still kind of scares me the amount of action that's kicked into gear by somebody just making an accusation. And I think that in 90% of the cases the accusations are valid. But I'm not going to be naive enough to believe that at some stage in the game kids aren't going to get wise to this and realize that they could get someone into an awful lot of trouble by just saying that, "He touched me." And that's happening. That's starting to happen, because this subject is getting a lot of air time. It's not that it's happening more often, it's just that more people are saying, "That happened to me and I don't like it." And now I think the kids are saying, "Well, you know I can get this guy behind bars pretty easily."

Fear re loss of
control during
investigation
Doubt that all
kids make true
disclosures
- possibility of
becoming a
victim of
false
accusation
Explanation of
fears

Possible reason
for false
disclosure

I: So you're being particularly cautious about that.

- F: So I think you have to watch that yourself and make sure that you're not in a compromising situation. That's what I said to Carol. I said, "What would you do if one of the kids from across the street comes over and says, "Your husband did this to me?" Or a cop comes up on my door and says, "Geez, supposedly your husband molested this little girl." What am I supposed to say, "I didn't do it?" What proof do I have. There's got to be two sides to it. I'm not saying I don't believe Robert. I do believe Robert. But I'm saying that for me I don't want to be in that situation where I have to say, "Well, geez. There was nobody else around but I didn't do it." There is that kind of feeling.
- I: Ya makes sense. Has all of this affected your relationship with your wife?
- F: Oh ya, definitely. At a time there it was pushing us further and further apart because we were both dealing with it a different way. She and I are quite different. She's very emotional. She's less, probably, practical - black and white - than I am. And she deals with things differently. Which is fine. But I think she wants me to deal with things the way she deals with them, so that I can understand her. I understand the way she feels, but I don't have to feel the same way in order to understand. And that she has a difficulty grasping. And I think she had a lot of problems dealing with the fact that I wasn't angry and I wasn't out for blood. I mean sure I did. There were times I just wanted to choke the living hell out of this little kid, but like I say I looked at the end result. I said, "That's not going to help us. What we've go to do is try to help us." So for a while there we went apart. I forget really...I think it was when we started going together, when Robert got out of his
- Safeguard against vulnerability to accusations
- Shared fears with wife
- Possible scenarios re false accusation
- Fear of not being able to defend own credibility
- Disclosure precipitating distance
- Reason - wife unable to accept husband's lack of passion
Different emotional style: temperament
- Acknowledging own anger and violent thoughts
- Reason for not acting out violently: rather get help for son: couldn't do both
Caused rift between them

school and we started going to Kincaid. Kincaid has the program where it's a family-type unit and you all have to go in. It's a participation. They work on the family aspect of things, which I think is very important. As well as how you're coping with your child. And I think that helped her because the counsellor there was asking questions like, "Why does he have to show it that way? What's wrong with the way he's showing it?" And I think that helped. Coming from somebody else it helped her to understand that, "Well, it's okay. He's dealing with it."

Action

Repairing rift:
learning about
each other
through safe
distance in
counselling
session.
Therapeutic
triangle with
counsellor.

F: And maybe that was good. Maybe that I didn't go off with a shotgun and blow this guy's brains out . . . What good will that do?

Now learning.

And I think then we started coming back closer and closer and started working on how are we going to cope on this point together, how are we going to be consistent in our approach to Robert. And the realization that when you've had your limit then the other person has to kick in. You have to be able to go to that person and say, "That's it. My rational way of dealing with the child is over for the day and I'm out. It's your turn now."

Accepting/work-
ing together on
problem-solving

Mutual support
with wife around
parenting.

I: Kind of like a team.

F: Ya. You have to be able to . . . and it's tough because you come home from work and you're drained. You know, you've fought the traffic and all the rest of that, but you go into the house and you look at somebody who's equally as drained, but they've had to deal with this situation the whole day long. So if you don't kick in at that point it's really, really hard.

Working on
parenting in
context of daily
pressures.

I: So ultimately, would you say it has caused you to work more closely together?

F: Oh, absolutely. And I think that we've come a long, long way. In some ways it's kind of strengthened us a lot tighter together than we would have been if this hadn't have happened. Because it's really made us look at our relationship and caused us to ask ourselves a lot of questions that we wouldn't have asked ourselves if this hadn't have happened. As a relationship goes, which is great. It's too bad it had to come about in this way.

Perception of positive change in marital relationship. Increased learning in marital relationship. Gains out of losses.

I: How would you say all this has affected your other son?

F: Well I think that he's doing quite well and probably despite ourselves he's doing very well. What I mean is that when bringing up Robert we tended to direct too much. We tended to give him the answers and not let him solve them himself. We tended to push him further ahead than we should have been. And I think we've been so focused on Robert and ourselves and our family and getting all of that stuff together that poor old Henry is kind of just coming up along the side here. He's growing up quite normally. He doesn't have any high expectations. He's not showing any signs of genius. Like Robert was an exceptional child. At the age of nine months he was walking. Before he was one year he was like a two year old. He would recite the names of cars. He would come in and say, "Whose Volvo is that in the driveway? I know Uncle Bob drives a green Volvo." This was like at two. He was way ahead.

Change in younger son.

seeing difference in how they raised the two sons, i.e. higher expectations on other one.

Less attention on younger son. description of older son as an exceptional child.

And I think that we thought that this was great. This child's going to beat everybody. The male ego kind of kicks in, "My God, an Einstein. My name's going to be remembered forever." And you get carried away. And you don't realize this is just a child and you've screwed up part of his growth that is not going to be able to get it back. And I think that we really haven't identified that's but by sheer luck we haven't had the time to pay to Henry. We've paid enough, but we haven't overdone it, that he's grown up quite well. And he's struggled to make his presence known. He's come out quite the little fighter. He's a different kid.

High expectations on older son.

Regrets re high expectations on older son.

Relief that younger son is doing well.

Younger son adapting well.

I: Sort of fighting for his own turf and his own attention.

F: Ya, he'll fight for his own turf. He gets the attention but in a different way. For a four year old he has an incredible sense of humour. And he's willing to try anything. He's just . . .

Younger son's sense of humour.

I: Adventurous?

F: Oh ya. Whereas Robert is the calm, is the gentle, the way he is normally. He could not pass any pet without patting it and giving it a hug. He's a softy. He's just your regular softy. And he's five feet tall for an eight year old. He's a big guy. And then you've got Henry. He's into the guns, and he's into the shooting, and he's got a bow and arrow, and he's doing karate jumps all over the house. And he's little. Just two totally different kids.

Differences between the two sons.

Older son:
quieter
Younger son:
louder, more
aggressive

I: Do you think all of this affected their relationship with one another?

F: I don't think so. I think Henry is starting to understand it a little bit more. I still don't know whether he has grasped the fact that this has happened to Robert. And certainly he was two when it happened to Robert. No, I don't think he's aware of that. I don't know when he will become aware of it.

Uncertainty as to how relationship between two boys was affected by abuse.

I: Has this affected your ideas about being a father?

F: In what way?

Uncertainty re meaning of question.

I: Some father have said that they believe that they need to protect their child to a greater degree and other fathers have swung the other way. They said it's more important that children be independent while growing up. so around the abuse itself, do you feel it's affected your role as a father or how you see your role as a father.

F: Ya. I think that one thing that hit home was the need to listen to your child and watch for the warning signals. And I think that there were a lot of warning signals that he gave us. But sheer ignorance ignored them. It wasn't that we intentionally ignored them, but we just didn't know what he was trying to tell us by the way he was behaving, and the way he was saying things, and the way he would look at various things. We weren't educated enough in this subject to know. And I think that would be one way it's affected my feeling.

Father role:
listen to child,
watch for
warnings

Ignored signals

Uncertainty re
meaning of
behavior

Need for
education re
abuse

The other way would be a part of me got hurt when you know that your child was . . . you believe in your heart that your child would tell you everything. And the moment you find out that they were doing something that . . . I'm sure that when my father found out I was smoking, it must have hurt him that I didn't tell him. It's that kind of an issue. You believe that you raise your children as "buds", "Hey, you're my son and you're going to tell me everything you do." And the realization that that is not going to happen . . . it hurts you because you have this ideal that you're going to be buddy-buddy with him.

My aspiration was to be my son's best friend or close friend anyway. And it still is. But I think I'm a lot closer to getting there now than I ever thought I was. It's an ideal. And realizing that, "Geez, why wouldn't he tell me? Why didn't he come to me? Why didn't he say, 'Geez, Bennie did this last night'. Did he think he would have gotten me upset? We could have dealt with it then, but he was so scared that we would have gotten angry at him, and that we wouldn't understand, and that we wouldn't listen to him. He wouldn't trust us.

And yet no matter how hard you try I don't believe, that you can instill . . . I don't think you can . . . I think you can be the best parent on Gods' earth. I think that's something that maybe fathers have a hard time dealing with. "God, why didn't he trust me? Why didn't he tell me?" And it's just a fact of life. And probably they're not going to tell you the first time they get absolutely hammered and the first time they have a cigarette, the first time they try dope or whatever. They're not going to tell you. But you should be hopefully tuned in enough that you can pick up all those things. And like I said, if we had been tuned in a little bit more we could have picked up on this and said, "What's wrong? What are we missing?" That would be my only one.

Hurt re
expectations

Loss if intimacy
with child

Analogy re
intimacy with
father
Expectation re
father role:
"Buds"

Ideal not met.

Perception of
role

Disappointment
re lost intimacy

Son's perception
of parents:
anger

Trust

Father role:
instill trust in
child re parent

Explanation of
child's lack of
trust.

Father role: -
tuned in to
child

I: Can you tell me a little bit about anything more that you did to try to help Robert, that you haven't already mentioned?

F: I guess, getting the help: willing to participate in anything that they really had or suggested. Even if I didn't agree with it I was willing to go for it. Because I look upon it from "What was the ultimate goal?" What did you have to do to get there?" Even coming to the family counselling that we do at the school. I'm finding it not that useful for me. But I'm going because I know its a requirement. And I'm trying to get as much out of it as I can. And it's helping my wife and I know it's helping her deal with me. And I appreciate that I'm probably difficult to deal with, different to deal with than she is. So I'm willing to do a lot of things that normally I would have shied away from. But I think that you have to put aside some of your personal feelings and personal preferences and person likes and dislikes, and realize what you're there for. And say, "If I'm going to get the best out of this or if I'm going to get the maximum then I'm going to have to participate."

It's almost like a seminar. You sit there and not do anything you're not going to get dick-all out of it. If you do get in and participate no matter how foolish and stupid you feel you still get more out of it than just sitting back. Fathers have a tough time accepting that this could have happened. I think mothers deal with the kids more of the time and I think they are more sensitive to seeing the changes in the child. I think that sometimes that fathers tend to react from the point of view like, "Are you sure? What are you saying? The kid's just acting out." I think that that's a big problem. But I think that if you could have a real major problem in your marriage. I think mothers are more accepting.

Helping behavior

Participating in counselling

Counselling not only helping son - also helping marriage

Willingness to participate

Putting preferences aside to help son and family

Justification for participating
Feeling foolish and stupid at times

Accepting abuse disclosure

Mothers more sensitive to child

Uncertainty re abuse occurring

Different perceptions could cause marital conflict

I: so you've tried to accept it from the outset and seek counselling?

F: Ya. You see I never really came out and jumped on the band wagon and said, "Yes, this has happened. Let's go out for blood." And I guess Carol was upset by that. I even, when I first met Ray, I made a statement that gave him the impression that I didn't believe Robert. I'll tell you what it was, he was starting counselling and I said, "I'm all in agreement. This is great. This is super. Disclosure and the whole thing. But what I want you to do is to keep in mind that if there is something that we have done as parents raising this child which could cause similar behavior or contribute to this behavior, then you've got to let us know."

And he misunderstood that to mean that maybe I thought the abuse didn't happen and that it was just the way we raised him that caused this behavior. And that wasn't it at all. What I was trying to say was that, "Just don't focus on the abuse and the behavior, but say this is the behavior, abuse is part of it, but let's look around elsewhere and see if there are any other --

contributing factors that could, coupled with this, have caused the behavior." Because I wasn't trying to say that I was the best parent. I know we must have made some mistakes and if somebody can tell me, "You shouldn't be doing this and you shouldn't be doing this.", then we need to know. I think that if you go looking for the solution to the problem and you believe that this is the problem you tend not to look at anything else. If you try to find out why the car won't start, and you strip the engine down, and you forgot that you didn't have an ignition key, you didn't look at some basic stuff because it started yesterday.

Hesitation re accepting abuse

Conflict with wife

counsellor doubts father's belief in abuse occurring
Agreed with counselling
willing to take responsibility for behavior problems

Counsellor misunderstood

Willing to take some responsibility

Responsibility

Need to cover the bases

Illustration of point

I: You wanted to cover all the bases.

F: Ya. If you're going through this whole exercise, like, let's go through the whole thing.

Get a comprehensive explanation

I: Was there anything that you did in particular to try to help the rest of the family, other than just Robert?

F: I know I'm making much more effort to identify to what I think my wife's needs are. I think that we've come a long way in knowing what she likes and what she doesn't like and what things I can do to help her. Because there were some little things that I could have been doing to help her along the way. I'm definitely making a conscious effort towards that end.

Helping by supporting wife

Increased awareness of wife's needs

Efforts to change

I: Has this affected your relationship with the boy that abused Robert?

F: Ya, I would say so.

I: Can you talk about that a little bit?

F: Ya. I guess. I haven't seen or spoken to him since the night that he came over and said, "Well no, I didn't do it." Actually that's not true. We saw him once before when we had gone down to Coquitlam Centre to see Santa Claus arrive on the helicopter. Just out of the corner of my eye I noticed him and another kid running down towards us. And I immediately said to Carol, "look straight. Bennie's behind us." And we both sort of held the boys so that Robert wouldn't see him.

Relationship to abuser - cut off contact

Avoiding abuser

Protect children from abuser

I: This was before the police contacted him?

F: This was after. This was just fairly recently. But it was important for us because we knew that Robert was still having a real problem with fear.

Time - seeing abuser
Child's fear of abuser

Oh, that was another thing about the trust. There was another aspect that Robert didn't believe that we could protect him. And he still feared Bennie. And I said, "Robert, do you think that I would ever let this happen to you again?" He said, "No, but Bennie said that he'll stab me with a knife and stab you with a knife." And I said, "Do you think he can do that?" He said, "Well, I don't know." And I said, "Look at me and look at Bennie. Don't you think that I could protect myself and protect you and probably take the knife away from Bennie?" And there was nothing you could do. You can stand on your head and you can buy a machine gun and it's not going to convince him.

Child doesn't believe father could protect

Father trying to build trust with son again
Father role

Helplessness re building trust - victim?

I: He's still pretty scared about that.

F: Ya. Absolutely. Now we're moving and it's had a real positive effect on him to get out of the house, to get out of the neighbourhood. All of those things. One of the things he said to Carol was, "Oh, so now Bennie won't go after me." That was important to him. Now that hurts, too, because you're trying to convince your child that you can protect him from anything. And he's sitting there going, "You don't know. You can't protect me." And that's something that you have to deal with. But no, I haven't dealt with him at all. I understand that he's supposed to be going to counselling again, but he's still having problems and so on and so forth.

Protecting/building trust - moving the family

- avoiding abuser
Son's fear of abuser
Hurt re son not believing father can protect
No contact with abuser
Abuser going for counselling

I don't know how I would react if I did see him. I think I would just ignore him. I don't think there would be any need to discuss it. Now if I were in a room alone with him and there were no witnesses, there's a part of me that would just want to beat the living shit out of him, just for the hell of it. But I don't think it's worth it. If I did that there I would be in trouble and it wouldn't help the family and it wouldn't help Robert.

Reaction to abuser - try to ignore

Possible revenge on abuser

Rationale against violence - not helpful

I: Is there anything that you have found particularly helpful as you've tried to cope with all of this?

F: I don't know.

Uncertainty

I: Any particular people you've dealt with or agencies?

F: Well, I guess this place here, and the school . . . Kincaid Special School was definitely a bonus. I think without that Robert would have been in real serious trouble. I didn't attend many of the father's groups, as Ray would probably tell you. It wasn't really . . . because I had forgotten the schedule or he would forget to call me until the last minute.

Helpful agencies
- counselling agency
- special school

Reason for missing father's group
- wasn't that helpful

Anyway, I did get to a couple. To be honest with you I didn't get a lot out of it. Except that I felt that I had helped somebody else. I didn't deal with it in an emotional way. I dealt with it very practically. I don't recommend that for anybody else because it worked for me. It might not work for others. But definitely coming here and that school. I would try to see to it that there was a school like that in every school district to be able to deal with these things.

Gain out of own experience - helping others

Positive re school

I: So what about the two places was particularly helpful?

F: I guess Ray's involvement here and teaching us about the emotions and basically spelling out to us what we had on our hands, and how we had to deal with it to help Robert. That's what we were there for. That really helped. That really put it in perspective. Because you don't understand unless somebody says, "This is what he's feeling and this is why he's feeling it." You just don't understand sometimes.

Learning re emotions around sexual abuse

Perspective on abuse

Gaining understanding

I: And Kincaid School?

F: It really took him and made him feel worthwhile again. The school was a bit of a problem, too, coupled with what he was going through - the both of them was just terrible.

School promoting child's self-worth

Old school a problem

I: His regular elementary school.

F: Ya. I think we would have pulled him out of there anyway because it was just a disaster. But Kincaid was just like night and day. All of a sudden this kid was coming home, and instead of me knowing the principal on a first-name basis as to why my kid was acting up all over the place, this kid's coming smiling through the door, loving it, dying to go to school. Just working very well. They're putting a little pressure on him now to try to get him to try to work out some of his emotions at school, which is fine. We had a little communication problem. It's not the kind of school where you can go and talk to the head master. You talk to four people and try to explain the situation.

Behavior change attributed to new school

Positive change in child

Difficulty in communicating with school

I: And what about on the other end of the spectrum, what have you found particularly difficult in coping with this problem?

F: I guess the time that it does take. At the time this thing broke I was in a different job, in a branch environment. I was very fortunate to have a boss who understood. He had the same sort of family type direction. You meet some people who are career minded and won't understand why you want to spend time with your family. That was our problem because it is very demanding. You've got to be able to go to meetings and meet with a bunch of people

Time: difficulty in length of time in healing process

Boss understanding re time
Time demanding

I could be gone for the afternoon once every week. So it is demanding on your time. And I would suggest that if that's going to be the case you have to let your boss know, "This is where I'm going and this is what I have to go through. If I'm going to be distracted at work and if I'm going to be a dough-head for about a week or so, understand. Don't try and hide it. so that's important.

Missing work.

Need to be honest with employer

Difficulty in concentrating on the job during disclosure period

I: So the time that it took to get everything . . .

F: . . . in place. Going to see doctors and going to meetings. You can't avoid doing that because it's important to get involved. It's a learning process, you've got to learn.

Time with other professionals
Time to learn the meaning and how to help

I: Were there any particular services of agencies or people that were difficult for you?

Human Resources professionals - a difficulty

F: Oh ya, the MHR people and the police.

I: I know you talk about that before. Can you spell that out a little more specifically, what was difficult about that?

F: I think that the one thing that really bothered me was that what they had to tell me up front didn't happen. Loss of credibility. They gave me a list of exactly point by point, second by second what was going to happen. They weren't even close. They weren't even in the ball park. That was as far as credibility goes you could whistle Dixie. I don't have any time for them at all. I spoke to Ray about that night. That's the second person I'd like to choke, the MHR person. They are useless as wings on a cow. Absolutely.

Expectations not met re process
Loss of credibility of agency
Contempt for MHR
Anger towards MHR social worker
Felt social worker not understanding of family's needs
Uncertainty re cause of problem

They have no idea what they're dealing with.

They have no perception of what you're going through. I don't care what their problem is, frankly. If they have a staffing problem or have a funding problem, that's my problem. And it damn well shouldn't be. Either they get out of it completely and let a private institution take it over or don't do a half-assed job. And the police system, too, was absolutely . . . I felt sorry for them in some ways because it was obvious that this guy hadn't a clue what he was talking about or trying to do.

Alternatives to present system
Disappointment with police process
- believe them to be incompetent in abuse area.

I guess the other thing that just frosted my buns was a situation that could arise in some cases where they would suggest that if there is a potential the other child could be abused they will take that other child away.

MHR apprehending other son if at risk from abused child.
Anger

I: MHR suggested that to you?

F: Ya, at one stage. This came up again when Ray was saying he would have to do an interview with Henry and go through counselling with Henry. If Henry disclosed that Robert had been abusive in the last year then he would have to report that to MHR and MHR could remove Henry from the house. I just told him, "Let them try." I could tell you right now that would not happen. No matter what I had to do that would not happen. And I flatly believe that. Because we have gone through this and we have put in the safeguards and we've put in the measures and we know that isn't happening. And if MHR after this total lack of credibility, if they can come in now and they're going to do this, I would have gotten extremely violent. Blood would have been flying. Because I didn't have any regard for them anyway. It was a joke.

Counsellor's response to risk

Report of possible abuse

Father's response:
- anger
- would not comply
- protecting son

anger toward MHR
- violence contemplated

Contempt for MHR

And I think you've got to know that and you've got to realize that. If somebody had said, "This is a joke. You've got to go through the motions. That's the only way you're going to get your kid some help." You've got to go through it. Then and only then can you get some help. At least you'd have been prepared. I thought that these people might actually help us. I guess that's what I believe.

Wished he could have known the outcome of the process before going through it
- hindsight

I: For some men, the abuse of a child brings back a memory of one's own abuse or the spouse's abuse. Was that ever an issue?

F: No. It never really entered into it. I never thought of it. You do kind of think back. I guess the only thing that it used to bring to my mind was the horse-play that you used to do with your brother or your cousin. This kind of thing. Or in rugby when you used to slap a couple of guys with a wet towel. You think, "Geez, I wonder if that means I'm a sexual deviant?" You don't know. That's about the only thing.

Father not abused.

Possible past events interpreted as abuse.

I: Were you ever suspected as the offender?

F: No, not to my knowledge. But I'm sure that those people in MHR would have told me. At one stage, it does go through your mind, "My God, what's Robert telling them? What if Robert tells Ray that I pat him on the bum when he goes by. What could Ray think of that?" You're just so naive. You're so uneducated. You don't know. What you have to realize is that before, that was great, but now as an adult sexuality, you don't do that.

Fear re false accusation
- ?
appropriateness of touching

I: If you had to go through all this again is there anything that you would do differently?

F: Ya, I would probably talk to the people first, that we suspected, and tell them. We were told not to do that as the element of surprise was lost. Now I know that's a pile of horse manure. I would go to the person and say, "I'm really sorry about all this stuff, but my son is saying that your daughter, or your son has done this to him. Now, frankly, his behavior has deteriorated to the point where he's uncontrollable. The only way I can get help is to go to MHR. He will then tell them that he has been sexually abused by your son. They will get the police. The police will interview your son and I can get my son some help. I realize this has destroyed the relationship between the two of us, however, we are friends - this is my son. You understand." We were told not to do that, because of the surprise.

Change in process: talk with family of abuser before reporting

Possible scenario for confronting abuser's family

Instructions by agencies.

And I felt kind of ashamed because I have always tried to maintain a certain amount of honesty and I felt like I went behind somebody's back, somebody we knew very well. And I felt ashamed about that. I felt like I was being dishonest. I felt that if I could have gone to his mother and said, "Listen, I'm really, really sorry, but this is what has happened. Now, I'm not presuming that your son has done this and frankly, it doesn't matter at this stage. What matters to me is that my son gets help. What should matter to you is that if there's any chance that your son has done, might have done this, then perhaps your son needs help." Because I reversed the roles and I said, "Geez, if this happened to me what would I do?" And if there was anything I would do I would send Robert to counselling because if he has been in a potential where somebody is accusing him, then there's no smoke without fire. Or let's not take the chance. Well, Henry's going for counselling. What does that mean? Does that mean Henry's been abused? Why take the chance? Why say, "No, he wasn't." Satisfy yourself. That's about the only thing I would do differently.

Ashamed of going behind abuser's family's back

Conflicting loyalty

Trying to be empathetic with abuser's family

Possible scenario

I: O.K. What suggestions would you give other men who face similar experiences?

F: Just . . . keep talking, keep the communications going between you and your wife because if you want to help your son, then a strong family unit is more important than anything in the world. And I think if you destroy that it's going to be twice as hard to grasp . . . he's then going to blame himself for the disruption of the family. Although it could be killing to you, you've got to keep talking and you've got to make sure that whatever differences you've had in the past, and even if you were on the brink of divorce, if you love your son then bite the bullet and do everything in your power or you'll kill him. You might as well just take the gun and blow his head off.

I think that if we would have split up or something, because we couldn't get it together, it would kill Robert. Knowing what kind of kid he is, it would have destroyed him. People go through different emotions and if you don't, you won't have to understand, but you just have to . . . and get somebody else involved. Like, don't try and work it out on your own. go to a separate counsellor. You need that third party, because there were so many things I told my wife and she told me, but you don't hear them until you get somebody sitting there and saying, "Well, you know really what he's saying is this, and really what she's saying is this." "Oh, ya, well now I understand." And you go home and say, "Well, I told you that." and "Well, ya, but I told you that." You need that third party. I never believed in marriage counselling and all this B.S. I thought it was a lot of "hooey". But I believe in it now. I don't think that they're super educated beings with golden wands. I think that they're just a chair. But you need that chair.

Suggestions:

- need for communicating with spouse
- need to support one another
- helping son is motivation to work things out

Son at risk if parents separate

Son at risk

Need for third party-counsellor to help

Positive change through talking with counsellor

Need to hear each other in a new way

Belief in counselling process

I: We've talked a lot about your experiences today. Are there any things that we haven't discussed that you would like to share from your experience?

F: I don't know. I think protection. If you were taking to a group of people, we had to go to one of these sexual abuse seminars and talked about safeguarding your kids, I'd say watch for the behavioral things, watch for the older child who plays constantly with younger children - whatever sex - watch for those.

Father role: to protect child

Problem:

- difficulty in fully protecting child
- watch for potential of abuse

No matter what you think. I mean this kid was the altar boy, for Christ's sake. And so what, it means nothing. Those kind of warning signs are much more important than kidding yourself because your son has answered 5 questions to you about what he would do if a car stops and what he would do if somebody does this or that.

Outward appearances can be misleading

Children unable to protect themselves

I would like to see almost an institution set up of testers who would go into the community, find out a few things about families, and then actually test these kids. Like totally out of the blue. Like, "We're going to get this kid to go with us. Stop, tell him, "Get into the car. Your dad's been in a bad accident. Quickly, come in the car. I'll take you to the hospital". Don't tell me that kid's going to say, "Ho, what's the secret word?" Give me a break! It's not going to happen. The kids' going to be in that car so fast it will make your head spin. What you've got to realize is that is a potential. So you've got to safeguard around that.

Need for better training of children

Possible scenario

Expectations of children's ability to protect is unreasonable

And realize to watch that if something has happened how to determine what's happened and the warning signs. What is this kid telling you by how he is behaving. Whose house doesn't he like to go to. Those kinds of things are critical. You don't listen to them and . . . I think that sexual abuse seminars today are, and I've only been to one which they had through the school, I mean they give you a fairly good understanding but they don't really delve into the emotional trauma that the child goes through or basically has to live with. And I think that more has to be done in that regard. And realize that it's a potential all around, no matter who.

Need to safeguard

Need to be aware of signs that abuse has occurred

Inadequacy of sexual abuse seminars

More need to educate parents
Potential of risk all around

I also suspected my father because the kids spent a lot of time over there, and we had asked them the same questions. And you just can't be sure anymore. I'm convinced now that nothing happened there. But when this first came to light it was, "Well, is he accusing Bennie because he doesn't want to accuse Grandpa?" And you'd be stupid not to think that is a possibility because it is a possibility. You can't rule that out. You can't rule anything out. You know.

Originally suspected father of abuse

Reason for suspecting father over abuser.

I: Okay. We're almost done here. I've just got a few questions, more kind of demographic questions. First of all, can you just tell me again how long it has been since you first learned of the abuse till now? Like, how long ago was that?

F: About 2 years - 2 1/2 years.

Time since disclosure

I: Just in rough terms, can you give me a sense of your gross family income? I've got 3 categories here: under 30,000 dollars a year - that's for both you and your wife; 30,000 to 50,000 dollars a year; and over 50,000 dollars a year.

Family Income

F: Number 2.

I: And the type of work that you and your wife do?

F: She works at home with the kids. And I am a banker. Type of work

I: Now the offender himself, he's been identified? Status of offender

F: Ya

I: Has he ever been charged? Not charged

F: No

I: So he's never been to court?

F: No.

I: Has he accepted or denied responsibility? Abuser denied responsibility

F: Denied.

I: Denied. And in treatment that you know of?

F: The last we heard that he was in some form of counselling but that would be about before Christmas. Abuser in treatment

I: Okay. Thank you very much.

F: You're welcome. You're very welcome.

APPENDIX H

OUTLINE OF ANALYSIS

<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Properties</u>	<u>Categories</u>
		1. <u>Initial</u> <u>Reaction to</u> <u>Disclosure</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- inability to prevent abuse- assumptions re child's safety- ignorance re risks to child- disbelief re occurrence- belief re loyalty of offender	a) Perceptions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- search for meaning in pre-disclosure behavior- assessing further threat to victim and family- exploring avenues to help victim and family	b) Thoughts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- shock at occurrence- anger toward offender- anger toward service agencies- disappointment/helplessness re preventing abuse- divided loyalties between victim and perpetrator- fear of future risk to children- sadness/loss re child's victimization, dream of healthy life for family- relief re understanding of child's behavior/anxiety	c) Emotions	

<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Properties</u>	<u>Categories</u>
	a) Spouse	2. <u>Changes in Relationships</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conflict re differences in showing emotions - conflict re retribution on perpetrator - belief that wives were angry with them - hurt re conflict with wives - relief re working this out - working as a team to help family - adjusting to one another in showing emotions - increased intimacy in marital relationship 		
	b) Victim	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sadness toward the victim - heightened sensitivity re interpretation of affection with victim - attempts to be open in talking with victim re abuse - problem-solver for victim - loss of spontaneity with victim - concern re victim's potential to offend - divided loyalties between victim and perpetrator - understanding acting out behavior of victim in context of sexual abuse - father compelled to learn about sexual abuse - disappointment that victim did not disclose immediately to father 		

<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Properties</u>	<u>Categories</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - retain healthy relationships with other children - sensitivity to sexual interpretations of affection toward children - relationship between victim and other children - desire to retain functional family processes - nurturing role with children 	c) Other Children in Family	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sensitivity to sexual interpretations of affection - aware of risk of possible compromising situations 	d) Children in General	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - choice to hide/disclose abuse of child - loss of spontaneity in relationships 	e) Extended Family and Friends	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - loss of relationship with the offender - divided loyalties 	f) Offender	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employer: inform re needs of family around treatment - becoming familiar with social service agencies - working with agency officials - frustration with agency personnel - growing familiarization with some agency workers 	g) Social Systems	

<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Properties</u>	<u>Categories</u>
		3. <u>Self Issues</u>
	a) Guilt	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guilt re failing to protect - guilt related to prior awareness of sexual abuse issues and risks - helplessness re preventing abuse - shared responsibility with wives 		
	b) Victimization	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - loss of control - loss of stability - disruptions re investigation and treatment - stress re victim's behavior change - stress on self-perception and relationships - reminder of own abuse as a child 		
	a) Finding Resources	4. <u>The Process of Recovery</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - goal: help for victim and family - conflict between agency mandates - frustration re getting help - started with pre-disclosure behavior - help-seeking becomes specific to sexual abuse following disclosure - also seeking help re marital conflicts - teamwork with wife - counselling agencies provide therapy and education - changing schools - expectations re agency produced relief or frustration 		

<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Properties</u>	<u>Categories</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - resolution re appropriate degree of guilt - accepting a degree of helplessness because of secrecy of abuse - knowledge re perpetrator adds to guilt - successfully finding help for family - reinstatement of father as protector, problem-solver, nurturer 	b) Resolving Guilt	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trust in themselves - trust in world - expectations re perpetrator, some agency personnel not met - regaining control - understanding consequences of abuse - world more predictable - on-going process 	c) Developing Trust	