

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF MEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL

ABUSE IN CHILDHOOD OR ADOLESCENCE

Carol Hubberstey

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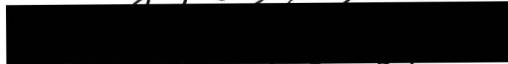


DEAN

DATE

June 13, 1988

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard



Dr. R. V. Peavy



Dr. C. B. Harvey



Dr. A. Oberg



Ms. M. J. McLachlan

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UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

1988

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Supervisor: Dr. R. V. Peavy

ABSTRACT

This study investigated, using a phenomenological approach, the male experience of sexual abuse during childhood or adolescence. Only those men who had not themselves knowingly committed sexual offences were accepted for the study. As was indicated by the literature review, very few studies have explored the issue of male sexual abuse. Instead most research efforts have tended to include the male experience as an addendum to the more frequently reported female experience. There are many reasons why this may have occurred, not the least of which is the undeniable reality that girls are overwhelmingly the victims of sexual abuse and that men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of such abuse. In the meantime though such practice may have contributed to the mistaken impression that boys are infrequent victims, and certainly has led to the collection of substantially less data on the subject.

Those studies which do exist generally fit into one of four general categories: the criminal justice system, mental-health clinics, hospital emergency room cases, and general surveys. Few if any studies have drawn from a volunteer sample of the general population and none has utilized the phenomenological approach with the express purpose of elucidating the individual's experience of the phenomenon. In this study five men who had experienced childhood sexual abuse voluntarily agreed to be interviewed two to three times each. The discussion centered on

their recollected experiences within the context of their families, the abuse, its ending, and the meaning or place it subsequently had in their lives. A situated descriptive account was written for each participant followed by a general comparative account of the totality of their experiences.

It was found that all of the participants had been abused by an older male. One was abused by two boys older than himself. The participants revealed two common family characteristics: weak or nonexistent sibling ties, and/or poor relationships with their fathers.

The general pattern of abuse began with an "engagement phase" wherein each boy was befriended by an older male who had stature or authority in the community or with their parents or both. This was followed by the "sexual abuse phase" which for the most part represented a confusing and frightening betrayal of the original trusting relationship. Salient features of this phase included, but were not confined to, a sense of guilt for having acquiesced to the sexual demands, internal conflict or confusion over the issue of responsibility, and some confusion over self-image and sexuality. At the time it may have represented a moral, emotional, and physical dilemma. A lack of information or environmental support, whether real or perceived, compounded the situation as did the realization that for the most part circumstances had more of a role in ending the relationship than did the desires or wishes of participants.

Coping strategies in the form of denial, blocking out, compartmentalizing, taking on new roles, and relegating the experience to the past, were also noted.

When asked, four out of the five men indicated that the experience had been important, particularly in terms of sexuality, ability to enjoy intimate

relationships, and self-image. These issues had not necessarily diminished in time as it was apparent that the participants continued to find connections between their past experiences and current behaviours.

In the final chapter the findings contained within this study are looked at in relation to those of previous studies. Recommendations for future studies are made and general implications for counselling are noted.

Examiners:

[Redacted]

Dr. R. V. Peavy

[Redacted]

Dr. C. B. Harvey

[Redacted]

Dr. A. Oberg

[Redacted]

Ms. M. J. McLachlan

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Impetus for Study

The impetus for the proposed study arose from my experiences as a counsellor in an agency where the mandate was to provide counselling and support services for the victims of sexual abuse. The clientele at the time consisted of two distinct groups: children (including adolescents), and adults who had been sexually molested in childhood. Both groups were largely comprised of females. While young boys were frequently seen for the purposes of disclosure or counselling related to sexual abuse, at the adult level, only women seemed to be the ones coming forward with victim-related issues.

The first time an adult male requested counselling for issues pertaining to previous sexual abuse, I was taken aback. Having done a lot of reading on the subject, I was aware that typically it was males who committed the offence and females who suffered the abuse. The classic model of incest in fact presented just such a scenario: identifying the father, stepfather, father substitute, or brother as the abuser and the daughter, stepdaughter, or sister as the victim. I was thus unaccustomed to regarding males as victims, unless they were children.

By the third or fourth such request for counselling however, I was no longer surprised and was instead wanting information that would assist me in the counselling process, and which would tell me whether or not there was something

which was distinct about the male experience of sexual abuse. When I turned to the literature though, it was apparent that apart from the occasional chapter and a relatively small number of articles, there was a dearth of information relating specifically to males as victims. What was far more common was the practice of grouping them within larger studies which were primarily focussed on females (Finkelhor, 1986). This alone meant that my effort to determine the nature of the experience as reported by males, was frustrated. It also raised the question of whether or not the experience as expressed by female victims was the standard I needed to adhere to. Rather than continuing to gather information on an ad hoc, case by case basis, I instead decided to conduct my own study which would focus solely on the experience of males who had been sexually abused as children or adolescents.

When I tested my idea with a colleague his response was--"You'll never get men to talk or to come forward." My experience however was to the contrary: not only was it possible to obtain male participants, it was indeed possible to find males who were ready to discuss their experiences. Furthermore, I also discovered a genuine desire to have someone such as myself understand what they had gone through. This they expressed both verbally and in their willingness to spend from three to six hours each talking with me about what was a very personal and difficult part of their past.

Statement of Problem

Until recently only limited interest has been shown in male sexual abuse as a subcategory in the overall phenomenon of child sexual abuse. A number of factors and assumptions may have contributed to this state of affairs.

First, it was the women's movement which provided much of the earlier support and incentive for open discussion of the issue, at least in so far as it pertained to women.

Second, prevalence surveys and reports from practitioners revealed that eighty to ninety percent of the victims were females, most of whom were being abused within the family. This led early on to the development of the classic model of incest: that of an incestuous family wherein it was typically a father or father-figure who would initiate sexual activities with one or more of his daughters (Finkelhor, 1984). Even in cases where the abuse had occurred outside of the familial environment, it was still found that for the most part, men were the offenders and females were the victims. Quite naturally treatment programs were designed to reflect need which meant that the emphasis was on working with female victims and their families.

Third, it was hard for anyone to imagine boys as potential targets for abuse. After all, offenders were almost exclusively male and it was assumed that their sexual preference would naturally be for girls.

Fourth, it was assumed that sex between a boy and someone older would obviously involve a female, and would therefore be an adventure that would probably have little negative impact. For boys, sex was supposedly more of an initiation rite than a violation of personal boundaries.

The result has been "a collective reluctance to identify the sexually molested boy as a victim per se." (Rogers & Terry, 1984, p. 92). This has translated into a failure to identify boys who are not physically traumatized, who have acquiesced in the face of (real or perceived) threats, or who have succumbed to the various material, physical, or emotional rewards offered, as "real victims."

Additionally, most of what is known about males who have experienced sexual abuse, has come from four general categories: the criminal-justice system; mental health and psychiatric clinics; hospital emergency room cases; and general surveys (Johnson & Shrier, 1985). The body of information which has been generated as a result, though it has been useful in terms of program design and service delivery, has failed to yield what could be called an overall sense of the phenomenon. Instead the sexual abuse has been broken down into separate units of information which in and of themselves, reveal little about the "lived" experience.

As a review of the literature indicates, the overall focus has largely been on prevalence rate surveys, retroactive comparisons of clinical records of cases involving male and female victims, reviews of cases within certain clinical populations, or anecdotal accounts which are primarily illustrative of whatever the researcher chooses to emphasize. Little attention has been paid to the non-clinical and non-offending population of male sexual abuse victims. Nor, to my knowledge have there been any studies which have attempted to draw on a volunteer sample and to use a phenomenological method. Given the growing awareness that boys have the potential to become victims of sexual abuse and that they will need help in learning how to reconcile that experience it is not unreasonable to look to research efforts which will illuminate the phenomenon and further our understanding of it in its entirety.

Methodological Considerations

With researchers becoming increasingly focussed on how it is that people react to a variety of stressful life events (for example: Brooks, 1987; Hunnisett, 1983; Wertz, 1985; Wortman, 1983), the need for alternatives to traditional methods of research has likewise emerged. Traumatic life events such as sexual abuse are for the most part not well served by quantitative methods alone. As a result the emphasis, at least in the area of social psychology may be swinging more towards methodological designs which facilitate "field setting" research (Wortman, 1983). This may be especially true for research which is specifically oriented to the field of counselling. As Giorgi (1983) has noted the phenomenological perspective has value in psychological (and presumably counselling) research because it is more sensitive to the nature of the phenomena; it emphasizes the presence of the researcher; and, it openly acknowledges the descriptive and qualitative moments in research (p. 156).

In the present study the intention--to gain a better understanding of the male experience of sexual abuse--clearly suggests a phenomenological design. The reasons for choosing this methodological approach are both practical and philosophical. Application of the phenomenological method meant that the focus could be on the entire phenomenon, rather than on singular factors which may or may not have contributed to its making; the goal in other words, was never to isolate, control, or predict certain inalterable relationships between minute aspects of the experience. In essence I wanted to present a descriptive account which would illuminate the phenomenon and contribute to a broader understanding of it.

In addition, the highly personal nature of sexual abuse suggested a need for a methodological approach which would emphasize respect for the subjective meaning constructed in response to the experience, "thoughtfulness," and an attitude of cooperation (i.e., trust) between researcher and participant.

As a methodological approach phenomenology is also compatible with the goals of counselling. As Samson (1984) has pointed out, the practical and philosophical basis of counselling is rooted in the belief in the "uniqueness of the individual, the subjectivity of the experience, and the importance of the client/counsellor relationship" (p. 5). These are not unlike the goals inherent in the phenomenological approach. Since, as a practicing counsellor one of my aims is to understand the client's subjective experience, it follows that investigation of that experience is legitimate both as a focus and as a stepping stone towards creating a broader understanding of like experiences. It follows as well that my bias and preference is for a methodology which will illuminate the subjective experience.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to develop a better understanding of the male experience of being sexually abused. The specific focus was to examine, using a phenomenological approach, the experience of sexual abuse as perceived and understood by male victims, and to elicit from them a sense of what that experience meant to them, based on their recollections of it. Only non-offending males were accepted as participants.

The research questions were designed to cover three general categories: the environmental backdrop in which the abuse occurred; the sexual abuse experience; and the subsequent meaning that it held in the participant's life. Since it was assumed that the sexual abuse would most likely begin at a time when the participant was in some sort of familial or pseudo-familial milieu (the title of the study itself suggests a time frame of childhood or adolescence), the questions in the first category were loosely structured around the central themes of: "What was it like for you growing up in your family?" and; "How would you characterize the relationships therein?"

The questions in the second category were focussed more specifically on the actual incidents of sexual abuse and were in part generated from the literature. There was no central question in this section. Instead there were a number of questions which had to do with the sequence or flow of the experience.

In the final section the general research question could be summarized as: "What has this experience meant to you in your life?"

These three thematic categories were expanded to become a list of interview questions which were addressed by means of in-depth interviews with the research participants. The questions are noted in Appendix A, but were readily abandoned during the actual interviews and were only referred to when or if the interview needed to be refocussed.

Contributions of the Study

It was revealed that there is a gap in the literature on sexual abuse, when it comes to the subject of male victims. It is hoped that the present study will contribute in a small way towards filling in some of that gap. Although it is recognized that males continue to dominate the statistics as offenders, it is also recognized that they have the potential as children, to become victims. Furthermore, there are many men who have never crossed the boundary from victim to offender but who continue to live with the knowledge of their own abuse and who may want assistance in dealing with their subsequent issues.

A secondary but nonetheless vital contribution of this study was to establish that it is possible to collect a volunteer sample of men who were willing to reveal their abuse experiences. This has been readily established in the past with women, but has not, to this author's knowledge, been established with the same degree of consistency with men. This study then may influence others contemplating graduate research in this particular subject area, to consider males as a worthwhile and accessible target group for study.

It is anticipated as well that this study will provide practicing counsellors wanting to know more about the subject of sexual abuse with a broader understanding of the male experience of victimization. It is hoped that this may lead them to be more sensitive to their own clients and the issues that may be affecting them.

Finally, the phenomenological method as it was used in this study may suggest to others that it is a viable option in researching sensitive and personal issues which have influence in the counselling realm.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Prevalence Rates

In the past fifteen years it has become increasingly apparent that child sexual abuse is a widespread phenomenon. For a number of reasons (see Courtois, 1979) the subject, which had heretofore been cloaked in secrecy and shame, has come to the forefront of public awareness. Work by people such as DeFrancis (1969) who was one of the first to produce a quotable prevalence rate (10 girl victims for every boy victim); Finkelhor (1979, 1984, 1986) whose reviews of the available literature have pointed out the need for better research and more attention to theory development; Rush (1980) who along with other feminists was instrumental in connecting the problem to the inferior status of women and children in a patriarchal society; and a wide array of others who have written from a personal or scholarly basis on the subject; has served to highlight both the depth and the urgency of the problem.

Despite the many and varied efforts, it has been difficult to get an accurate reading on the national scope of sexual abuse. In part that can be attributed to the nature of the offence: victims are primarily children whose dependent status and young age hamper their ability to speak up, and offenders are primarily adults who are unlikely to volunteer information which may result in criminal charges. As such sexual abuse does not lend itself either to early detection or to

widespread cooperation. Nonetheless a review of prevalence surveys in the United States indicates that anywhere from 6% to 62% of women (with the average being around 20%), and 3% to 31% of men have experienced some sort of sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence (Finkelhor, 1986). Variations in definitions of sexual abuse, lack of definition in the upper age limit of childhood and differences in methodological rigour have hindered the ability to present more homogeneous statistics.

In Canada a national population survey on sexual offences revealed among other things, "that at some time during their lives about one in two females and one in three males have been victims of unwanted sexual acts." (Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Youth, 1984, p. 175). When the data was compared against that of three other national surveys, using factors such as ratio of victimization by gender for children under the age of 16, the Committee's conclusion was that "about three in four victims are girls and one in four is a boy" (p. 198). Although it was found that the proportion of female to male victims was higher in the other surveys, it was determined that as much as anything else, this reflected policy decisions with respect to the scope and type of services provided rather than an inflated or disproportionate national population rate. Hence their finding that services providing assistance and protection for young male victims were warranted but lacking.

In his analysis of recent scientific studies on child sexual abuse Finkelhor (1986) similarly identified the absence of information relating to the abuse of boys as a problem of note, stating that:

Because girls are at a higher risk they have been subject to more attention, study, and analysis. This is unfortunate because it may have contributed to an already mistaken public impression that boys

are rarely abused at all. It has resulted also in the collection of substantially fewer data about the abuse of boys. (p. 63)

Thus whatever is known or assumed about the long term effects, characteristics, or aetiology of sexual abuse is largely based on the female experience. This unfortunately has led to the assumption that men and women, or more particularly, boys and girls, experience sexual abuse similarly.

Male Sexual Abuse: A Recent History

Most of what has been written about males who have been sexually abused has come from four general categories: the criminal-justice system; mental-health and psychiatric clinics; hospital emergency room cases; and, general surveys (Johnson & Shrier, 1985).

Groth (1979), widely recognized for his research with sex-crime offenders, has found that previous sexual abuse is a common phenomenon amongst this population. Over one-third of the 348 men he interviewed, who were imprisoned for sexual offenses, had been sexually abused as children. Many other studies conducted with comparable prison populations have revealed similarly high incidences of childhood sexual abuse (Johnson & Shrier, 1985, list these studies).

Cases derived from mental health settings have primarily presented anecdotal reports of children or adults who were in therapy at the time (Awad, 1976; Dixon et al., 1978; Langsley, et al. 1968; Raybin, 1969). Most were suffering some kind of mental breakdown or behavioral problem which was attributed to the sexual abuse. All were cases involving father-son incest.

In her survey of clinicians working at a mental health unit, Swift (1977) found that one-third of the case-load were males who had been sexually abused.

Over half had been involved in some form of incest; the remainder had been homosexually attacked by strangers. Twelve of the males also admitted to having in turn committed acts of sexual abuse themselves, against children (p. 325). Swift concluded that, contrary to what was indicated in the literature, male children were significantly at risk for sexual abuse.

Johnson and Shrier's (1985) review of cases seen over a six year period at an adolescent medical clinic indicated forty cases of sexual abuse involving male victims. The offenders were all said to be men and ranged from total strangers to trusted adults or family members. They felt that there were probably many more cases of abuse involving preadolescent males, but that this group was particularly unwilling to disclose their own victimization. Nasjleti (1980) has noted as well that even when the abuse has already been disclosed, adolescent boys tend to be extremely reluctant to talk over their experience. In an unrelated retrospective review of cases Reinhart (1987) found that cases involving boys as victims, more often than those involving female victims, were reported by a third party. In other words, the boys weren't inclined to report on their own.

Hospital emergency room cases have been described in two separate studies by Ellerstein and Canavan (1980) and Kaufman et al. (1980). Both reported that approximately ten per cent of patients showing signs of sexual abuse were boys. Kaufman identified fourteen male victims of rape, half of whom had been attacked more than once and by different assailants. All had been sodomized and most had been beaten. Ellerstein identified sixteen patients, all of whom had been assaulted by a male. One half of the offenders were known to the victims.

Retrospective surveys of college students have also shown surprisingly high frequencies of childhood sexual abuse for males, as well as females (Finkelhor, 1979; Fritz, Stoll & Wagner, 1981). Because their studies were drawn from samples that cannot be considered representative of the population as a whole, their generalizability is limited. Nonetheless, at least two common themes emerged from the information presented. First, as with girls, boys seem to be at risk from older males. The offenders were almost exclusively men, about half of whom were family members, while the rest were outside friends or total strangers. For the most part the perpetrators were not considered to be, nor did they necessarily see themselves as being, homosexual. This was particularly true in cases of father-son incest, and perhaps lends credence to Sgroi's (1982) theory that sexual abuse is not about sex; it is about power and control.

Second, there was an overall reluctance on the part of victims to admit to their own abuse. With few exceptions, when the sole victim was a male, the case would not be reported at the time of the abuse incidents. The Canadian Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children (1984), in their review of the data, noted for example that boys were significantly less likely than girls to report their own sexual molestation. About nine in ten male victims kept their experiences a closely guarded personal secret (p. 187).

Quite naturally, with so much information available by comparison about the sexual abuse of females, there is a tendency to want to know what the variables are that exemplify the similarities or differences between male and female victims. At least two studies have attempted to uncover this information.

Pierce and Pierce (1985) compared data from 180 cases of sexual abuse involving females with 25 cases involving males. All had been reported over a three year time span to a child abuse hotline. Significant differences were found in a number of variables.

The male victims were generally younger (average age of 8.6) than their female counterparts (average age of 10.6), an indication they thought that as boys become more physically mature, they are better able to defend themselves against continued molestation. Their family constellation was different as well. Males were more likely to live with their mothers and to have no father present in the home. This suggests that boys may be particularly vulnerable to abuse outside the home when there is no male model or companion available to them within the family. Although this study did not attempt to get at long term effects, the authors did indicate that lack of protection from either parent, in conjunction with the use of force, could possibly bring out later treatment issues around feelings of loss, anxiety and a sense of worthlessness.

Finkelhor's (1981) review of the available evidence on victimized boys however, differed somewhat from these findings. He noted for example, that the mean age for victimization was slightly older for boys than for girls, falling between the ages of 10 and 13 in most reports (p. 78). He suggested that the reason for this had to do with the difference in the sourcepoint of abuse; males being more likely than females to be abused by people external to their immediate family. Thus victimization occurred at an older age, in part because before boys could become vulnerable, they had to develop a certain amount of independence from their families.

As part of their overall survey of college students, Fritz, Stoll, and Wagner (1981) were able to distill some comparative figures for males and females sexually molested as children, and to suggest implications for therapy. Their findings were at variance with other studies, particularly in terms of the effect on current functioning. The participating males reported a generally more neutral or positive assessment of their earlier sexual experiences and an extremely low rate of problems overall with current sexual attitudes and relationships.

However, two factors did stand out as having some importance. Positive coercion was more often present in the male experience and had greater negative impact over the long term. Having participated in the sexual activities when there was no evident threat or use of force seemed to lead to intense feelings of guilt later on.

Since males were more often abused outside the family, the presence of coercive inducement is not altogether surprising. Offenders who are not family members would likely find it necessary to use more subtle and persuasive methods, whereas when the abuser was a family member, it would be easier to take advantage of the greater interpersonal power that he or she wielded. At the same time, if, as has been suggested elsewhere, males are less likely to see themselves as "victims," then to have taken part in a "victimizing" activity without any attempt at self-defence, may seem to call into question their masculinity.

Males were also more reticent about discussing their molestation with family members. This was seen as indicative of the socialization process which does not encourage males to talk openly about intimate matters. Although not stated as such in this study, this may be one of the factors contributing to the generally low rate of reporting that seems to typify sexual abuse involving males.

Several other reasons have also been given in explanation for why so few males, relative to females, ever come to public attention. These mostly have to do with the so-called "male ethic" of self-reliance, physical strength, denial of emotions, and competitiveness, all of which seem to make it harder for boys to seek help (Nielsen, 1983). When coupled with the fear of being labelled homosexual, if the offender is male as they most often are, and acceptance of the notion that sexual exploits for boys are supposed to be fun, then the reluctance to disclose is even more assured (Finkelhor, 1984; Nasjleti, 1980).

While some clues can be gleaned from the literature as to the incidences and characteristics of male sexual abuse, the material relating to long term effects remains somewhat scattered, and largely speculative. Nielsen (1983) for example, has written that the possible outcomes of unresolved sexual trauma may be traditional clinical symptoms such as depression and sexual dysfunction. These symptoms although common to female victims have yet to be shown with any consistency in males.

Studies of various groups, such as adolescent and adult sex offenders (Burgess, et al., 1978; Groth, 1979), drug abusers (Benward & Densen-Gerber, 1975), prostitutes (Badgley Commission, 1984), and adolescent runaways (Weber, 1977), show that a high proportion--both male and female--were sexually abused as children. While it cannot be said that such behaviour is caused by childhood sexual abuse, it also is not unreasonable to assume that at least some portion of those individuals were negatively affected by their experience of it.

The problem with so many of these studies, according to Finkelhor (1986) is that in the haste to devise treatment interventions and to gather information,

certain methodological considerations have been overlooked. In particular he notes the lack of a standard definition of sexual abuse and the over-reliance on clinical populations for research participants. To this could be added the tendency to see the sexual abuse of boys as an irrelevant or minor aberration not worthy of study in and of itself, and the failure to regard the two situations as related in terms of the overall phenomenon but perhaps unique in terms of experience.

The present study attempted to address these concerns first by suggesting the need for such research, secondly by looking for a volunteer group of participants who were not at the time in counselling for issues related to sexual abuse, and finally by adopting a broad definition of sexual abuse in accordance with those offered by Brant and Tisza (1977) and Rosenfeld (1977). The salient features of their definitions are that the abuse exposes children to sexual stimulation which is inappropriate for the child's age and level of development, and that participation does not negate the abuse issue since children are known to frequently go along with or actively engage in sexual activity for a number of reasons: because it may seem the only way of obtaining affection; because it may actually feel pleasurable, because it is perceived whether accurately or not, to be safer than resistance; or because in the face of personal helplessness, it becomes emotionally preferable to identify with the person who has all the power.

Ultimately what is required if we are to begin to understand fully the experience of being sexually abused from the male perspective, is to look at nonclinical cases, to utilize a broad definition of terms and to go to those who actually have had the experience without themselves having become offenders.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

PART ONE

Methodological Considerations

As a research method, phenomenology is rooted in the philosophy of "fidelity to the phenomenon" or the lived experience in whatever form, structure, or consciousness that it takes (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975; Van Manen, 1984). Central to this is the belief that there should be "no gap between the subject and the object; no complete detachment of consciousness from that of which it is conscious" (De Koning, 1982, p. 2). In short, the focus is on the interrelationship of the individual and the events and experiences that constitute his or her own world (Valle & King, 1978, p. 7).

Conceptually phenomenology can be likened to an artistic endeavour such as sculpting wherein the finished product emerges not simply from the imposition of a preconceived design, but from a combination of the artist's own imagining and the inherent qualities of the raw material. Similarly the thrust of the phenomenological researcher, after having identified his or her own aims, is to bring forth and to elucidate from the raw material which constitutes human experience, a particular phenomenon. In neither situation does the method alone dictate the outcome or final form, although the kind of knowledge sought or kind

of artistic impression desired will have influence on the artistic or methodological decisions that are ultimately made.

Because of the belief in the primacy of the lived experience and the indivisibility of human existence from the context of that experience (Colaizzi, 1978), the phenomenological process eludes fixed methodological description. Instead the phenomenon is what dictates the method, not the reverse. As Samson (1984) notes, "phenomenology is not a single method, but a plurality of methods" (p. 18). The determining factor according to Colaizzi (1978) is a combination of the aims and objectives of the researcher and the nature of the phenomenon in review.

To illustrate, the conceptual definition and methodological steps employed in the current study, are clarified through brief examination of the approaches described by Van Manen (1984), Colaizzi (1978), and Giorgi (1975).

For Van Manen (1984), phenomenological research is more than an "approach"; it represents a state of "being." That is, the knowledge that Van Manen seeks is both personal and pedagogical and goes beyond illumination of the phenomenon to incorporate as well its "essence" or essential nature. In other words he questions both the concreteness and essence of the experience and in doing so takes into account the vast array of factors which might shape and give meaning to an experience. These include but are not limited to linguistics, sociocultural and historical traditions, artistic and literary descriptions, as well as experiential descriptions or dialogic reflections.

Another feature which differentiates this style of phenomenological inquiry is the involvement of the researcher. Whether formulating the initial research

question or generating data, the researcher, according to Van Manen is personally involved and thus, derives both educational benefits and self-understanding from that involvement. Hence, knowing who the researcher is and what his or her preconceived notions, suppositions, and assumptions are, takes on special importance.

Colaizzi (1978), on the other hand, views phenomenology primarily as a research approach and finds that it is useful in the explication of human psychology and experience. He believes that human experience is an essential component of psychological phenomenon but that it has been disenfranchised by a reliance on technological objectivity. Hence, his emphasis on fidelity to the phenomenon as it is experienced rather than as it might be operationally defined.

Through meaning analysis of subjects' statements, Colaizzi seeks both knowledge and understanding of the experience. He begins the research process by interrogating his initial presuppositions to discover the nature of his influence on what he is about to investigate. This helps him as well in the formulation of the final interview (research) questions. The meaning analysis allows him to go beyond the data while the return to the subjects for confirmation of his analysis and interpretation, allows him to stay true to the data.

Giorgi (1975) is likewise interested in phenomenology as it applies to psychology. His focus though is on the structure of the experience, the variations in the structure, and the manner in which it appear (p. 83). His method is to use a double context--that of the subject and that of the researcher. The subject is encouraged to say anything that he or she deems worthwhile and in language that is ordinary and without theoretical overlay. The researcher then organizes the

material in a way understood by him. Consequently, knowing the perspective of the researcher is important because it establishes the limitations of the study and sets the context in which the findings have meaning. It is also important according to Giorgi, that the researcher's prejudices and presuppositions be acknowledged and then bracketed, particularly before embarking on the analysis of data.

With the preceding discussion providing context, I will now review the steps taken in the current research. My concept of phenomenology was as a research tool; my focus was on the creation of an overall understanding of the structure of the sexual abuse experience for males as well as their personal meaning of that experience.

I began the research process by identifying my interest in the phenomenon, by generating research questions and by noting my expectations and assumptions. My attention then shifted to the personal interviews arranged with each participant as this was the primary medium for data collection.

The personal interview method was chosen for its suitability to the investigation of the phenomenon of sexual abuse. A written description might have enabled the participants to give way to whatever need for secrecy or whatever feelings of shame may have existed, and would not have necessarily enhanced the investigation. Furthermore I wanted to establish a degree of trust and openness with the participants so that we could freely explore their experiences. This I believed was better achieved through dialogue.

The analysis stage which followed used steps different from those described by either Colaizzi (1978) or Van Manen (1984). I did not, for example, do a line by

line meaning analysis, nor did I gather material extraneous to the reported experiences or the subject material since neither methodological application would have been suited to the goals of the research project. As such, rather than rewriting statements from what participants said to what they meant, I instead chose to write a singular descriptive account for each participant using as much as possible their own words to illuminate the dominant themes in their experiences. This was achieved by reading and rereading the "thick" description compiled for each participant, first for a sense of the whole and then for a sense of emerging themes related to the structure of the experience.

Another difference in the current study is that from the outset I thought it important to establish the backdrop for the experience. Each participant was thus asked a number of contextual questions relating to familial and social relationships at the time. Their responses were presented as a separate section which set the tone for the individual descriptive accounts that followed.

Having taken a cursory look at the difference in phenomenological styles, I will now consider those elements of phenomenology which were of particular importance in the current study, specifically the interview, the researcher, and the participant.

The Interview

The interview, with few exceptions is central to the conduct of phenomenological research. It is qualitative, descriptive, and focussed, which is to say that the intent of an interview is to probe the life-world of the participant, to obtain his/her descriptive interpretation of certain aspects of that world, and to focus on a certain phenomenon or theme (Kvale, 1983). Within this framework

the researcher and participant establish a dialogue which is based on their joining together in an interactive, semi-structured exploration of the phenomenon.

Of necessity this dialogue is based on the participant's recollection of a past experience. Consequently the description which emerges includes factors such as time, culture, lapses of memory, and an overlay of the participants own interpretive framework. These inevitably render the recollected experience somewhat different from the original. Since the intent was to gain a better understanding of the structure and meaning of the experience, accuracy of recall was not part of the criteria for the study, and thus was not considered to be an issue.

In the current study the male experience of childhood sexual abuse was investigated. Males who participated in the study were encouraged to speak openly, to draw from their own recollections and to express in their own words their view of the phenomenon. (It is this which is ultimately revealed.)

The Interviewer

In phenomenology the researcher is an acknowledged part of the investigative process. Consequently who the researcher is and how it is that he or she receives and understands the data takes on methodological importance. Without this information the reader has no way of knowing what influences were brought to bear on the research design and analysis and does not know in what context the findings have meaning. As Giorgi (1975) points out, that means getting clear beforehand on one's preconceived notions of the subject matter. This stage is commonly referred to as "making explicit one's presuppositions": mine are thus stated on page 26.

Another important aspect of the researchers involvement is the ability to maintain an "open" stance; to hear whatever it is the participant has to say, to accept whatever emphasis or meaning he/she wishes to give the phenomenon. My ability to achieve this was in part due to the fact that I had no experience with either aspect of the investigation. Since neither maleness nor sexual abuse are a part of my lived experience, I could maintain what Van Hesteren (1986) terms a "quest" orientation toward the phenomenon. This has to do with one's ability and willingness to be a "perpetual beginner" and is interconnected with self-awareness and awareness of the other (Ibid., p. 211). The importance of examining one's biases and openness to the participant was made clear for me when I discovered on one occasion that I was, in a figurative sense, backing away from the participant because he was not expressing the phenomenon as I wanted to hear it. A re-examination of my presuppositions and research purpose helped me to become aware of the root of my actions and thus allowed me to return to the participant with a renewed openness and readiness to hear what he had to say.

Participants

In the phenomenological interview participant and researcher engage in a "coinvestigative exploration" of the phenomenon (Sprinkling, 1986, p. 22). Consequently it is important that the participant be articulate, have experience with the investigated phenomenon and be willing to spontaneously describe those experiences. It must be remembered though that the focus is not on the individual but on the phenomenon as it is revealed through his or her experience of it (Colaizzi, 1978). It is important as well that the individual feels free to use language that is natural and absent of theoretical constraints or interpretations

for it is in this way that the everyday world is both affirmed and revealed (Giorgi, 1975). It is this life-world which defines the uniqueness of each experience and which ultimately provides the departing point for phenomenological research.

PART TWO

Methodological Application

The present study employed the phenomenological approach to explore the experience of childhood sexual abuse as expressed by adult males. More specifically, the study was designed to elicit the participant's experiences in order to apprehend both the meaning and structure of those experiences. A series of individual, audio-taped interviews were conducted, using a format of open-ended questions to guide the dialogal exchange. The questions fell into four general categories, originally defined as family environment, the abuse experience, meaning creation, and, implications for counselling. During the data analysis stage the third category was changed to read "ending/meaning" and the fourth category was changed to read "reflections." Both changes were made to more accurately describe the content of the dialogue between myself and the participants.

Each interview was transcribed and formed the basis for the "thick" description for each participant. The transcripts were read through a number of times to get a general "feel" for the content and to determine if additional thematic categories were present. Statements were then colour-coded to reflect the identified categories and transferred to index cards. Those lines which seemed to be similar in content or to represent common themes across

participants were also noted. A situated descriptive account was written for each member followed by a general comparison of the data across members. Chapter four represents the culmination of this process.

My presuppositions and personal assumptions. As mentioned previously, phenomenological protocol requires that I make known at the outset my personal assumptions about the phenomenon under study. These in part are representative of personal opinion as well as reflective either of statements drawn from the literature or from my counselling experience with women who had been childhood victims of sexual abuse. In brief my assumptions are as follows:

1. That men would clearly identify the experience as having been a violation of their bodies.
2. That men would express outrage over what had happened and would see the offender as being fully responsible.
3. That the family or environment would form an important backdrop to the experience.
4. That it would be difficult to secure participants because it is not something which men easily or willingly disclose.
5. That sexuality would have become an issue at some point either immediately following the abuse experience or in early adulthood.
6. That current relationships would be affected by the previous experience.

Participant Selection. A total of eight males were interviewed; from these, five were selected for participation on the basis of personal suitability and ability to meet the selection criteria. Three were found to be unsuitable; two because I felt that they were more in need of counselling and one because his experience

(two separate incidents of sexual assault), did not fit within the definition of sexual abuse (see p. 21).

The criteria for participant selection were that they had all experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence; that they were not currently in counselling for reasons of sexual victimization; and finally that they had not themselves offended against children. I had a two-fold reason for establishing the latter guideline: I did not want to be the recipient of information which I might have to report to the appropriate authorities (if for example a previously unreported incident of child sexual abuse were revealed), and, the ability to conduct a study based on a trusting relationship would be severely impaired were I to accept offending males as participants and then have to report them. The reason for choosing not to accept anyone currently in counselling for issues relating to sexual victimization was simply that I did not want to disturb or disrupt the therapeutic process of working through sensitive issues, nor did I necessarily want to conduct interviews based on newly surfaced material that had not yet been integrated.

Participants were located by various means. Three came to me by word-of-mouth; one was known to me previously through contact on another matter; and, two were located through friends. An open letter explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix B) was circulated amongst friends and referral points, and given to the participants beforehand to provide them with prior knowledge of what it was they were volunteering for. Although an ad was placed in a local newspaper, it did not produce results. This may have been due as much to the fact that I only ran the ad for one week, as it was due to the sensitive,

personal, and probably inhibiting nature of the subject. Thus I would not rule this out for future studies of this sort as a method of locating volunteer participants. Since I was able to locate the five participants I needed within the established time-frame, there was no need to repeat the newspaper ads or to expand my scope. Those men who were referred to me by word-of-mouth were asked to call me directly, thereby leaving the choice to participate entirely in their hands.

Once contact was made a time and place for the first interview was quickly established. Upon meeting, the topic was reviewed, the consent form (see Appendix C) was signed, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time was again reinforced. Confidentiality was a priority for most participants, so assurances were again given that the personal details such as name, age, occupation, and offender's name, would not be revealed. Participants were also provided with a listing of local resources (see Appendix D) so that should they have found that they wanted to explore their experience at a deeper, more personal level, they at least had an idea as to where to begin.

The Interviews

Each participant was asked to commit himself to two interviews since that was originally thought to suffice. When it became apparent though that I needed further clarification of the data from at least three of the members, an additional interview was arranged with each one. The interviews lasted around one and one-half hours each and all were audio-taped. The interviews were conducted in a variety of locations: an office at the University of Victoria; the private home of a participant; a local agency; and a business office. Some time was spent in discussion about unrelated matters so that we could get a sense of each other.

Given the importance of the interactive relationship between researcher and participant, I thought it reasonable that we both have an opportunity to assess our comfort level with the process, the material, the format, and each other.

The Questions

A list of questions based on personal counselling experience with sexual abuse victims, plus information taken from the literature, was drawn up beforehand. It was revised a couple of times to reduce the total number of questions and the final draft (see Appendix A) was then used as a focussing agent during the first interviews. That is to say, the questions were used to initiate in-depth discussions on the particulars of each participant's experience but not to limit the scope of their recollections. Reflective listening techniques were utilized to further the dialogue and to explore content as it was presented.

The Analysis Procedure

Following completion of the first interview all tapes were transcribed and the resulting texts were sent to the participants so that they could have the opportunity to go through them prior to our second meeting. The first interview was based on the questions as outlined in the Appendix. The second and third interviews had no such semi-formal structure though and so involved a freer exchange of information, assumptions, and clarifications. The material from these interviews was transcribed and appended to the original transcript. Each of the protocols or "thick" descriptions was read through carefully with an attitude of openness for whatever themes might emerge. As I read I noted similarities and differences between participant experiences. At the same time I began to

highlight statements which illuminated one of the four main categories. These statements were transferred onto index cards which were colour coded according to the previously mentioned categories. A set of coded index cards was thus prepared for each participant.

Within the general categories, subthemes were found such that the units of analysis became more discrete and the structure became more apparent. For example, it was found that within the general category of "abuse experience," it was possible to delineate four additional subunits and to describe the experience in terms of an engagement phase, the abuse itself, coping strategies, and the ending and subsequent meaning attached to the experience by the participant. The category "family environment" was similarly redefined to incorporate two subunits: thematic tone and family relationships. In the same vein changes were made if it was deemed that the original category did not accurately enough reflect the emerging themes. Thus the category "implications for counselling" was retitled "reflections" to indicate the tone and direction the final interviews had taken.

Although I initially tried sorting the index cards according to categories rather than participants, it soon became apparent that the experiences, though similar also contained differences which were reflective of the participants. Hence it was not possible to continue with the original sorting and I instead chose to present the categories within the context of each participant's history.

As much as possible in the resulting explication of the data, the participant's own words were used to illuminate the experience in terms of its structure and meaning.

CHAPTER 4
EXPLICATION OF THE DATA

PART ONE

A brief profile of participants

The names and some personal details have been changed to protect the identity and confidentiality of participants.

1. Lionel

Lionel is 30 years old, single, and at the time of our interviews was not involved in an intimate relationship. He has had liaisons in the past with women but is primarily attracted to men and considers himself to be "gay." He attends university on a part-time basis while working full-time as a library clerk.

The first time I asked Lionel to take part in this study, he readily agreed but when I approached him a month or so later to set up meeting dates he suddenly declined, saying that he was concerned about his confidentiality and more particularly that I might try to "force" him to report his abuse to the authorities at the Ministry of Human Resources (MHR). Some months later he called back to volunteer again and this time we were successful in getting together. The reason for the change of heart was that Lionel had in the meantime verified his position with MHR and based on what he was told, decided that he need not be concerned.

Lionel grew up in a "Forces" family in which routine and discipline were the norm. He has an older brother and sister and another brother eight years younger who because of the age difference was not a strong presence in his story.

During our first conversation Lionel appeared reserved and his comments were often terse. The impression I was left with was of one who was still angry over unresolved past issues and guarded against possible intrusions into that area. He often could not recall his feelings or specific incidents associated with the abuse, but could give an intellectual account of what had happened and had a rather cerebral attitude towards it. He insisted on holding the interviews at his apartment and by the second and third meetings seemed more relaxed and less formal in his comments.

Lionel's family had obviously been very important to him as a child. He acknowledged during our conversations that he had spent a lot of time trying to make it appear perfect, choosing to ignore the flaws or imperfections which might otherwise spoil that image. He was quite sure for example that his father had sexually molested his sister because he remembered her telling him so one day. However he didn't query her statement then, nor did he want to do that now. Lionel seemed not to make any connection between his sisters' experience and his own even though it was her husband, his brother-in-law, who sexually abused him from the time he was twelve, for approximately six years.

2. Ernie

Ernie, a 27 year old practising lawyer, was at the time of our interviews, single, childless, and not involved in an intimate relationship.

Ernie was the oldest of three children. His parents had emigrated from Europe when he was very young and had then had two more children, a girl and a boy. Ernie was five years older than his sister and ten years older than his brother. His upbringing was morally strong but poor in terms of finances and family unity.

Ernie's manner and style of presenting himself was basically one of reserve. He chose his words carefully and gave thoughtful, factual answers that seemed largely devoid of feeling but which were likely accurate in terms of content. This was probably consistent with his whole approach to life, which was to "leave the past in the past." The only reason he had come to disclose his experience was that during a period in his life when he was fatigued and under a lot of stress and tension, he caught sight of the man who abused him, in the company of two or three young boys. This brought back a flood of memories of events that he had held back for a long time. The presence of the young boys was particularly disturbing for him and caused him to decide to report his experience to the police. Although an investigation was conducted, nothing substantive was revealed which meant that the police could not press charges. Ernie nonetheless felt that by his actions he had at last broken his silence and discharged his responsibility to other potential victims.

The sexual abuse began when Ernie was about 10 or 11 and lasted roughly one year. It was initiated by the parish priest.

3. Lloyd

Lloyd is 35, separated and the father of two young girls whom he sees on weekends. He is a skilled tradesman and was employed at the time of our interviews. The middle of three children, Lloyd has a brother 5 years older and a sister four years younger than himself.

Lloyd denied and kept hidden his experience of sexual abuse for over twenty years. The breaking point came about two years ago when continued drug and alcohol abuse and increasing marital tension led to a nervous breakdown and suicide attempt. As a result Lloyd entered into a period of intensive counselling and personal exploration during which time he gradually revealed to a number of people that he had been sexually abused. This had gone on for about four years from the ages of 12 to 16, by a man who in that time had also become a family friend. At the insistence of his wife and therapist Lloyd reported his experience to the police and was subsequently asked by crown counsel to testify in court. It so happened that the man who had abused him was on trial for the sexual assault of two young boys who were about the same age as Lloyd when it began for him so many years ago. His testimony was crucial in establishing the longevity of the offenders' behaviour and in supporting the children's stories. It also served a therapeutic purpose for Lloyd in that it provided public verification of his victimization.

During our conversations, Lloyd's manner seemed generally shy and hesitant and he required a lot of time in which to consider his responses. Beneath his reserve was evident a lot of mixed emotions about what had happened. Lloyd still felt embarrassed and guilty for his perceived role in the abuse which is what made

it difficult at times for him to talk. At the same time he was concerned that I understand the entire story and didn't appear to want to withhold any information.

4. Richard

Richard is 26 years old, homosexual, and at the time was unattached. He had been seeing a counsellor in Vancouver regarding his alcohol dependency and sexual abuse experiences, but then for some reason had decided to move to Victoria. No longer a practising alcoholic, he had instead become an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous and Adult Children of Alcoholics and felt as though he had a lot of support from both groups.

There were six children in Richard's family. The oldest boy was from the mother's first marriage while Richard and his sisters and brothers were the products of the existing marriage. Richard was the second youngest and had a brother younger. His father is Chinese and his mother is Caucasian. Though he was not sure of the details, Richard thought that his mothers' first marriage had been physically abusive. Her second marriage, with Richard's father, was not abusive but neither did it seem to him to contain much in the way of emotion or affection.

When describing his sexual abuse, Richard's speech, tone of voice, and gestures were all quite animated. He required little prompting to begin talking and once started, was quite expressive. While Richard could remember neither the duration of his abuse nor the sequence of sexual encounters, he could vividly recall specific moments and feelings. He was interviewed three times and each time became clearer as to what had taken place. This caused me to have to revise my notes somewhat and to ask for additional clarification when it began to

sound as if he was presenting contradictory information. What I discovered as a result was that some of Richard's memories were indeed conflicting but that this mostly was a reflection of the degree to which he still had unresolved issues around who was responsible for what had taken place.

Richard had earlier spoken with the police about laying charges against his former abuser and as a result discovered that this man not only had recently been charged with the sexual assault of two young children but had actually been under suspicion since 1981. Receiving this information was constructive for Richard as it validated both to himself, and his family, that his abuse indeed had been an experience worth taking seriously. Equally as important was the message to his family that this man was a "sick" individual and not just lonely as they had told Richard originally.

Richard's own abuse began when he was approximately 12 and lasted for about seven to ten months. The offender was a former minister, and friend of the family.

5. Donald

Donald is a 32 year old native artist. He is single and striving to find a healthier, more productive way of living.

He is the youngest of ten children; both parents and most of the siblings were alcoholics. When Donald was 3 years old the family split up because of a fire that destroyed their home. For the next three years he lived with various relatives in the community. It was during this time that he recalls being sexually molested, first by an aunt and later by an uncle. At the age of 6, Donald was sent to residential school where he continued to be sexually abused, this time by school

mates. He eventually ended up in a foster home but that situation was physically abusive and so when he was 16, he made the decision to leave and ended up living and prostituting on the streets of Calgary.

Donald was self-effacing and almost child-like in his style and manner of presentation. He was rather neutral in his appearance, as if to deny his sexuality, and both times that we met I noted the way in which he "hid" his body with his clothes. This fit with what he told me later in terms of being scared about sexual intimacy and feeling as if what he most needed for the moment was to develop strong, nonexploitive friendships. Donald talked easily about his childhood experiences, including the sexual abuse. Most of his statements reflected the considerable time he had spent in the last year reading and trying to arrive at some understanding of himself and of his sexual abuse. The painfulness of what he had grown up with was evident in his words and his face. At the same time he expressed positive determination to let go of previous self-destructive habits and behaviours.

PART TWO

Family Environment

The participants were initially asked a number of general questions about their families: questions which were meant to elicit both the thematic tone of the environment as well as the social relationships therein. In the first instance the primary question asked was—"What was it like for you growing up in your family?" In the second instance the central question was—"How would you describe the sibling and parental relationships in your family?"

Family environment was chosen as an entry point for three reasons, the most immediate being that it gave me a relatively safe topic with which to open my dialogue with the participants. Since I did not know any of them in more than a cursory manner, I wanted to allow them some time to build up to talking about their experiences of sexual abuse.

The second reason had to do with methodological congruence. The intent of phenomenological research, as expressed by Van Manen (1984) is in part to understand the "life-world" of the research participant. This is achieved through a process of gathering what he calls "insightful descriptions" that relate to specific aspects of that persons life-world.

By focussing the dialogue initially on family environment I was similarly attempting to enter the life-world of each participant. Since the purpose was to both understand and place their experience of sexual abuse within a wider context, I allowed the participants to tell me which aspects of that environment were most significant for them. Having each one talk about the same fixed point in time (i.e., a particular age) was not as important as the verbalization and perception of their familial experiences.

The third reason had to do with the literature pertaining to sexual abuse. Family environment, variously referred to as family dynamics, family history, and family aetiology, has figured prominently in the literature of the past ten years and is generally seen as an important contributing factor to the overall dynamics of sexual abuse (e.g., Benward & Densen-Gerber, 1975; Finkelhor, 1985; Justice & Justice, 1979; Sgroi, 1982). The emphasis on family is primarily a result of the overwhelming statistical and clinical evidence which shows that despite the so

called "incest" taboo, the majority of offenses occur within the family or with a trusted adult. More particularly the data indicates that those at risk are most often female children while those most likely to offend are adult male members of the same familial configuration (i.e., blended, natural, or extended). Hence knowing something about the internal family dynamics as well as related demographic information has been seen as necessary to the development of a treatment approach and model of sexual abuse.

While I did not assume that the male experience of sexual abuse would necessarily be comparable to that of the female based model, I did take into consideration the thrust of the literature and made the general assumption that the family would form an important backdrop regardless of whether the abuse was intrafamilial or extrafamilial. Given that most children grow up in some sort of familial milieu it seemed to me that this context had a practical place in the participant's experience as well. With this in mind the questions I asked were intended to allow the texture of that backdrop to emerge so that it could be woven into a broader understanding of their individual stories.

Family Environment: Thematic Experience

The participants, as stated previously, came from diverse backgrounds and expressed a range of experiences. Despite this they each responded in such a way as to convey a sense of unhappiness, of something not quite right for them within their families.

The one exception to this was Lionel who instead presented two versions of himself; one as a young boy caught in his own denial, and one as an adult now able

to say what the child previously couldn't. As a child or teenager, Lionel thought that he would have said of his family that "everything was fine" and that he was "having a good time." As an adult though he could acknowledge that this had more to do with what he wanted to believe and how he wanted to appear to others than with his inner awareness which was that "it wasn't a perfect home" and that "there were a lot of things going on which made it pretty traumatic." Although he was unable to be specific as to what he meant by traumatic, Lionel's suggestion was that it had to do with his father around whom the family gingerly revolved. He was for example, distinctly aware of an unspoken family rule that conflicts and tensions were to be kept away from his father and that family peace was all important.

Lloyd and Richard on the other hand were clear and immediate with their feeling expressions and spoke similarly of their family experiences. Lloyd for instance, recalled that he generally felt "quite lonely" and that as a result he "didn't feel like a part of the family for a very long time"--indeed not until he had established himself in the world as a young adult. Before that time though, he recalled that: "I was always the one in trouble so I spent most of my time on the streets, playing outside the home. I did that for years."

Richard remembered that he found his family "very painful most of the time" and that as with Lloyd, he "didn't really like living at home." This tied in with his impression that for the most part he was considered and treated by his parents as "more of a nuisance than anything else."

Ernie and Donald offered more circumstantial descriptions of their families from which thematic tones were elicited. Ernie's response that there was "a lot of

violence," that there "weren't very many good times" and that he was "living on the streets at a very early age," seemed to speak of a feeling of alienation and a need to rely on himself and to take care of his own needs as best he could.

Donald expressed similar sentiments though for obviously different and more traumatic reasons. With the demise of his family structure at the age of three, he then spent the next three years moving "from relative to relative" before entering at the age of six, into a residential school. He had clearly lost his base of support though and the next years into adulthood were spent in a state of temporariness. From him was drawn a sense of loss and lack of belonging or permanence which because of the finality of his experiences left a more lasting and deep-rooted impression.

Family Environment: Social Relationships

With respect to the relationships within each family, the participants expressed at least two common themes: weak or non-existent sibling ties, or poor relationships with their fathers. Lloyd, Richard, and Donald expressed both themes while Lionel and Ernie spoke principally of their fathers.

According to Lloyd, there was "no real relationship" with his sister and brother. Though he doesn't state it, the five year age difference between each of them may have partly been the reason for the distance. As for his father, he remembers that "because he was a salesman he was out on the road a lot, climbing the corporate ladder." In other words, "he didn't seem to be around all that much" and when he was around Lloyd remembered him as being "verbally powerful" and given to such "demeaning" lectures that: "I used to wish that he'd just hit me

because it would be a lot easier and get it over with quicker." While neither parent showed much emotion towards each other, Lloyd thought that they each had a favorite child in whom was invested at least some display of affection. The recipient of his fathers' attention was Lloyd's young sister while his mothers' affection was directed towards his older brother. When asked if he felt loved, Lloyd's reply was a definitive "No."

Richard recalls that there "wasn't much talking between the children" and that as a result, he "never knew his brothers and sisters." They also tended to do things on an "individual basis" and any joint activities which did take place he thought were more the result of "loyalty" than of "genuine love." What was perhaps most difficult for him, was that he and his father "didn't talk," or, "if he did talk I was being punished in some way or being yelled at for something." Because of this Richard didn't feel that his father was much of a role model. It was the lack of communication in his family that was so "painful" for him. Similarly it was the way in which his parents imposed their standards without inviting comment or discussion that Richard felt reinforced his "feeling of helplessness" and of not being respected as an individual.

Donald's familial relationships were largely brought to an end by the fire that destroyed the family home when he was three years old. From that point onward, he had very little contact with any of family, most of whom were alcoholics and busy with their own survival in various foster homes. Although he maintained throughout his adolescence that he knew and loved his family, he also admits that it was "easy for me to say that because to a great degree it was fantasy." Since his parents died when he was ten and his siblings seemed not to want to have much to do with each other, he had only that fantasy to sustain him.

As a child Lionel "idolized" his family and their relationships but as an adult he recognized that there were tensions, that his "father was drinking a lot" and that their relationship was primarily "competitive" and, therefore, lacking in closeness. He felt that he always had to be a perfect child because "perfection" was what his father espoused and if he wanted to be "loved" and "liked" by him then Lionel assumed that that was what he had to at least strive for. Consequently he endeavored to excel in everything that he did; in school, in the cadets, and especially in his role as family peacemaker.

Ernie's view of his family was as spare and to the point as was his response. "The environment wasn't right" he says, "it wasn't a good one to come home to." He was also clear as to the source of his discontent, stating that "when my dad was home, I was rarely there because there was conflict everywhere." The conflict was largely between his parents who differed markedly in their lifestyles and values. His father "drank, gambled, smoked, fooled around and played the horses" while his mother "believed in God, went to church two or three times a week and tried to raise the children to be the same."

With the exception of Donald, none of the events in the participants lives were in and of themselves out of the ordinary. Many children likely have similar feelings and experiences to those expressed by the participants. And yet for these five men, with their different backgrounds and personalities, there was in their memories and experiences, a commonality: a vulnerability and a desire for affection or acceptance which left them open for the sexual abuse that was to follow.

PART THREE

Participant Data

Lloyd

A. Engagement Phase. Lloyd's experience of sexual abuse began when he was 12 years of age. At that time it was normal practice for his mother to occasionally send him on errands to the local grocery store a few blocks away. Though part of a large city, theirs was a small neighbourhood in the sense that most people knew each other. Generally the errand was completed without event but on one particular day while in the store to pick-up something for his mother, Lloyd met Vince, a 28 year old store employee: "He was in the back of the dairyman, stocking shelves and somehow a conversation came up." Recalls Lloyd, "That is basically how it started; when I was sent up there to get groceries." It wasn't long before it progressed from conversations in passing to an acquaintance: "He sent home dated material...told me to go around to the back door and gave me these things of orange juice or chocolate milk." Soon the acquaintance became more of a friendship as Vince continued to prove his worth to Lloyd: "I was smoking then and it was pretty difficult. He used to leave cigarettes on the dash of his car for me and I would pick them up after school."

At the same time that Vince was becoming friends with Lloyd, he was also establishing a relationship with Lloyd's mother. This he went about in much the same way as he had for Lloyd; by engaging her in regular in-store conversations and by giving her outdated food items. In all "it took Vince about four to six months" to develop a friendship with Lloyd and to establish his legitimacy and trustworthiness with Lloyd's mother.

For Lloyd who was already feeling isolated within his family and lacking in a close relationship with either his father or brother, Vince represented the first adult male who was not only willing to pay him attention, but with whom he felt he could have a trusting friendship. He thinks that Vince likewise represented a source of relief for his mother in that he was someone whom she thought could exert a positive influence on Lloyd to keep him from getting into further trouble. It is not surprising then, that when the question came up six months later of them going to Banff National Park together, it was according to Lloyd, "my mother who convinced my father that I should be allowed to go with Vince." It was during this camping trip that the relationship bond was tested and the transition from friendship to sexual abuse was begun.

Lloyd remembers the first time that it happened:

I think the sleeping bags were zipped together. That is when he first grabbed me. He basically just hugged me at first but then he started fondling me. I remember that really upset me because I didn't like being touched there in the genitals.

His reaction he remembers was fear: "I was pretty scared. I didn't like the way it felt. It had never happened before." In part Lloyd's reaction was triggered by the memories of an earlier incident when he had been sexually attacked in a gas station washroom by an older neighbourhood boy: "I was petrified. There was nothing I could do. It was bringing back memories of what this guy had done to me before." Quite apart from the scariness of the entire experience, Lloyd remembered that "basically I had never really known anything about masturbation before that" and so was ignorant not only of what Vince's behavior meant but also of how to respond to it.

Lloyd's vulnerability with respect to Vince became apparent to him in other ways as well. He distinctly recalls for example, that "I was 1000 miles away from home with nobody to talk to or to say anything to and with no way of escaping from Vince. Just to sleep even became difficult." He believed too that he had no alternative but to remain silent. Says Lloyd, "I was relying on him to get back home." Before leaving the Park, Vince molested him "two or three times more" but then refrained from any further sexual contact until after their return.

Though he was "really happy to get home," Lloyd remembers with incredulity that he chose to remain silent about his camping experience with Vince. When asked why or how this may have happened, he could say only: "I don't know, maybe I was scared to." Trying to recall the basis for that fear, Lloyd speculates that he thought that if he did tell, his parents would either not believe him or else would blame him for what had taken place.

B. Sexual Abuse Phase. Once it was apparent to Vince that Lloyd wasn't going to say anything, the sexual violation quickly resumed. "Within a month or two" of their return, he and Vince were meeting regularly either mid-week or on Sundays for some kind of outing. During the week it was the movies and on Sundays regardless of the weather or time of year, it was an excursion out on Vince's boat. Invariably, no matter where they were, Vince would turn the occasion into an opportunity to meet his own sexual needs by molesting Lloyd. It was mostly according to Lloyd, fairly routine sex; "masturbation, then shaving cream as a lubricant,...anal sex never happened."

Despite the routine predictability of Vince's demands and the seeming simplicity of the pattern of their relationship it became for Lloyd an increasingly complex issue that enveloped his life and affected him in a number of ways.

The most immediate of Lloyd's concerns were the rewards Vince constantly provided. In a sense it became a moral dilemma. "I was," he says, "rewarded for the things I did. You know like material things (such as) hamburgers, food, plus cigarettes, movies, clothes, and later on a little diamond ring." He remembers that "these were things I never had before" and essentially he was afraid that he would lose everything were he to refuse Vince's demands. He also liked the attention and the feeling of being special that he got when he was with Vince. Because of this, Vince's generosity and willingness to spend time with him was difficult to resist and probably became a factor in his participation.

Another dilemma Lloyd faced was the way in which his family embraced and accepted Vince:

I think it took away the idea that it was bad...there's this guy that's been accepted by my parents and my grandmother. He used to take my grandmother out dancing...he was pretty solid into the family. I think my dad liked him too because he always brought over a bottle of wine for Sunday dinners.

In addition to Lloyd's moral entrapment, he also experienced a physical entanglement which roughly coincided with the onset of puberty about one and a half years following his initiation with Vince. Because he at first had no physiological response to Vince's sexual manipulations, Lloyd thinks that the molestation "really didn't mean anything for the first year or two." However with passage into puberty the dynamics quickly changed and Lloyd recalls that they then went from "me lying there passively while he did it to me," to "mutual masturbation" using "shaving cream" and other aids such as "a seaweed whip." The passage from passivity to participation added yet another dimension to Lloyd's turmoil and probably further ensured his sense of entrapment and thus his

cooperation. Once he began experiencing physical pleasure and worse yet, began participating, he was no longer the passive victim or the one being "done to." He then was both participating and deriving pleasure, and as such became symbolically if not literally more closely linked with Vince.

Throughout his experience Lloyd recalls feeling among other things, "scared," "powerless" and as if he had "no place to run." However he at the same time felt unable to disclose what was going on to his family. His relationships in that sphere he says, were too strained: "I would get jumped on all the time by my father and brother. And so I just never said anything at all. If things were bothering me, I just held them in."

When all was considered, it seemed easier at the time not to say anything and to just accept or ignore the feelings. The decision, conscious or not, had its price which Lloyd suggests was his self-esteem: "As it progressed, I was feeling more and more uncertain about myself...the secret became a real burden and I started realizing that I didn't feel normal."

Lloyd's feeling of abnormality or differentness was most noticeable in terms of his social relationships: "I didn't have that many male friends. I was on the rugby team, but...I was pretty withdrawn." He wondered too about his sexuality, especially when he was with friends or male peers:

At that time, 12, 13, 14, guys talked about girls and stuff like that. Nobody said they did this with some guy on the weekends. I started realizing that it was something I couldn't say. I'd probably get beaten because I was with another guy. I might be queer.

Not wanting to risk a physical confrontation or "that someone would think that I was kind of weird," Lloyd remembers that "it was something I never discussed with anyone. It was my secret."

C. Coping Strategies. Lloyd's way of coping with his experience was to dissociate or to create two separate realities. "In the daytime," he says, "I was one personality but then when I was with Vince I was somebody else." During the week and while at school, Lloyd recalls, "I was tough, hardened, lots of fights, lots of pushing around and stuff like that." With Vince however, he remembers clearly that "I surrendered to the whole thing that he did to me. The only way I could describe it would be like two people living in the same body." Of his ability to "surrender" or to cope, Lloyd says:

I have the ability to shut myself off and almost become a deadened person and that's what I did--shut off the emotions, shut off the feelings. I just tried to hide it and thought maybe it would go away. I tried to forget it.

The other technique he employed was rationalization. "It was after all, only for 10, 20, 30 minutes in a week. The rest of the stuff was fine. That was only brief." Part of what may have made the experience seem bearable was that it wasn't violent and didn't involve anal sex or other acts which he would have been loathe to perform. The few times that Vince did try anal sex "it never happened because it was too painful." And although Vince did "perform oral sex" on Lloyd, he could never convince him to reciprocate. As Lloyd recalls "that was one of the reasons why Vince got really angry at the end--because he said that after he did all these things for me, I wouldn't do this one little thing for him." So while Lloyd at times thought that Vince's sexual behaviours and proclivities were "weird" he was at least able to keep his own involvement within the confines of acts which he considered more acceptable and "normal."

D. Ending/Meaning. Lloyd's relationship with Vince ended as it began, quietly and gradually. He recalls that "it ended by just slowing off. I wasn't seeing him as often and Vince was trying to become a Big Brother and was training some twins." Lloyd's own sexual interest was becoming more strongly focussed on girls. "I was starting to meet girls" says Lloyd, "and I found that I liked them better." He was 16 and the relationship had lasted 4 years. A short while later Lloyd moved to Vancouver Island with his family and the connection with Vince was severed.

The most difficult legacy he has had to live with are his own judgements about his involvement with Vince. He is particularly harsh on himself for having taken part in something that he now considers "deviant," and feels "ashamed" that he would have made such a choice in his youth. "I know how things got set-up" states Lloyd, "how things were arranged, how it really wasn't friendship; Vince had one purpose and would to achieve his goal, do whatever he had to." He cannot refrain from adding though, "How I let myself get into something like that really bothers me. I find it difficult to understand." The factors which may have softened the impact at the time and which made it seem "o.k."--i.e., lack of violence, rewards, the attention, tolerable sex acts--are the very reasons why he is so unforgiving of himself now.

In addition to his continuing sense of personal shame, Lloyd remembers that "for the longest time afterwards, I had a very poor self-image. I didn't like myself at all; I didn't care about myself." As a result of not liking himself, he found that in his social relationships "there was always something holding me back; I never gave one hundred percent."

Feeling uncertain about himself, isolated, and ashamed of his former relationship with Vince, unwilling to trust men or women, and therefore reluctant to make deep commitments, Lloyd experienced a long period of depression, and alcohol and drug abuse that culminated in a suicide attempt two years ago. Part of the process of recovery included disclosure of his experience to a number of people (wife, family, police, counsellors) which then led to an appearance in court to testify against Vince. Despite the court's position that Vince was a "sick" individual who was nonetheless responsible for his own behaviours and for having violated his position with children as a trusted adult, Lloyd continued to "feel bad" that he had "participated over such a long period of time."

He is left too with a feeling of responsibility and inner shame: "I have sort of a dirty feeling, I feel kind of ashamed that I participated and that I didn't say something earlier." Was this an important or meaningful experience for him? "Very important" responds Lloyd, "when I look back to the way I was for so many years...so quiet and withdrawn. I just didn't feel normal." Then he adds, "it is my past...but it's something I want to hide." Beyond the guilt are hints of anger at his "betrayal" by Vince who in his quest for sexual satisfaction, pretended to be "like another brother" and by his family for not having seen what was going on or at least not having questioned the intentions of a 28 year old wanting to befriend and spend so much time with a 12 year old.

E. Reflections. When asked what it would have taken for him to tell someone at the time about Vince, Lloyd's response was: "It was just impossible, whether or not I even thought of it, it was just impossible." He connects this to his feeling that no one in his family would have understood, supported, or believed

him and that it was something he just had to accept. At the time it wasn't a widely publicized or even recognized subject, hence some of his lack of awareness as to who, outside his parents, he could turn to and again, whether it was even something that would be taken seriously.

In reflecting upon our interviews, it was apparent to both of us that Lloyd still blamed himself for having acquiesced to Vince's sexual demands and held himself fully responsible for not having been more perceptive and less taken in by the rewards and attention offered. In a more contemplative moment he allowed that the image of his abuse still held a prominent place in his memory:

It wasn't something that was natural for me. But why it carried on for such a long time...maybe I used him just as much as he used me....I got rewards, trips, all sorts of things. But you know, 23 years later I can still remember the colour of the curtains on the boat, the pattern, the hull of the boat....

Richard

A. Engagement Phase. The engagement phase for Richard had as much to do with the feeling of being "neglected" as it did with the chance meeting of a particular individual. Richard who was 12 when the sexual abuse began, recalls that he was generally "very unhappy" with his life at the time. His feeling of discontent was largely associated with his family: "My father never took us anywhere. Everybody tended to do things on an individual basis." In Richard's estimation then, they weren't behaving as a family unit.

Eventually though his parents got involved with the church and began attending and taking Richard on a regular basis. It was there that he met Jack. Richard recalls that "he was an ex-minister. His wife had died and he had given up the ministry and was working at our church. He didn't have any children."

Though generally shy and withdrawn in the company of strangers, Richard remembers that with his mother's encouragement, he quickly overcame this and within a few Sunday meetings, began to respond to Jack. His parents seemed to feel similarly as they too began to socialize with him and to welcome him into the home as a family friend.

Amongst the congregation Jack was known for his fondness for children and for the "group outings" that he seemed to like to organize on their behalf. His method, according to Richard, was to first take the children on group outings thereby winning the approval and trust of their families and to then take them on individual outings where he could more easily influence them. Jack established his relationship with Richard in much the same way as he did with the other children: by including him in group activities: "He used to take us to the Rec. Centre where there was a swimming pool and afterwards he would take us for something to eat."

Looking back on it now, Richard remembers that Jack "from the very beginning wouldn't touch us like a normal person; he used to play games with us in the swimming pool" that he at the time did not wholly understand and which he found vaguely uncomfortable. While he wasn't aware at the time what this meant, he soon found out when "within two or three months (of their meeting) Jack began openly touching me" when they were alone together.

B. Sexual Abuse Phase. As stated earlier, Richard, though not able to recall with absolute confidence the scope and duration of the abuse, was able to describe in detail some of the incidents and the associated feelings. The first time was especially clear for him because it came as such a shock and made explicit for the first time what had heretofore been expressed as innuendo and game playing.

It happened when Richard and his brother were sitting in Jack's car with him following a swim session at the Community Centre. Richard remembers that he was in the front seat next to Jack while his little brother was in the back seat:

He first put his hand on my thigh. I'd never had anyone do that before. I'd had people hit me on the knee, but this was on the thigh and he left it there." It was really hard for me because I had already told him not to do it.

Growing up in a family where physical expression of closeness was not considered the norm, Richard felt that he had no guidelines for what might be construed as "appropriate touching." Nonetheless his reaction to Jack's touch was immediate: "I didn't like it so I asked him to remove his hand." Jack however was not to be put off so easily and told Richard, "well I am just doing it because I like you and you have to trust me." He also told him: "If you want me to take you places then you have to let me do this otherwise I am going to take you home." With that Richard remembers, "he reached over and touched me on my privates."

For the duration of that particular experience Richard recalls that the message was essentially, trust me and let me do this as the other boys do or else there will be no more trips and special attention. By the end he says "I was in tears because I really wanted to do these things and I was scared that if I didn't let him do it then he wouldn't like me anymore."

In retrospect Richard from this point forward, was faced with the moral dilemma of--do I accept the relationship on Jack's terms and do as he demands of me in order to get the rewards and feeling of being special, or do I say no and risk losing it all? When he considers that Jack had by then made it clear that they "could do all these things because I was very special" to him, Richard thinks that "it wasn't really a decision; it was an ultimatum that I couldn't turn down." The

promised rewards--boating, camping, a trip to Disneyland--were too great to resist. As Richard recalls, "you know when you are 12 years old those are all very appealing." Equally as compelling was Jack's threat to terminate their relationship. "He told me," says Richard, "that...I was very special and he really liked me and if I didn't want him to do this then we couldn't be friends." For a boy who had just recently discovered the joys of adult male companionship and the feeling of being special to someone it can be imagined why Jack's ultimatum seemed so threatening and at the same time, irrefutable.

By his silence Richard made known his resignation to Jack's demands. Once assured, Jack kept his commitment and on many occasions took him swimming, boating, camping, or hiking. During these outings the touching became more and more like "a little game we played." It mostly consisted of fondling and masturbation and would take place almost anywhere. For instance, when swimming, Richard remembers that "he would back me up against the side of the pool where nobody could see us and put his hands down my pants. It became natural for us to do that." In the change room the play would continue, with Jack "looking" and making "suggestive comments" when nobody else was in sight.

While trapped by a seemingly unresolvable moral problem, Richard at the same time was increasingly aware of the emotional dilemma his relationship with Jack presented. The two issues, already somewhat indistinguishable, became progressively more so as the abuse continued and as Richard discovered that despite his new-found sense of affection and belonging, the "touching" and other frequent sexual demands continued to leave him feeling "very confused."

When queried further about his confusion and how he felt in general about what was happening, Richard says: "sick to my stomach and frightened is what I remember most. I had never done this before and I felt icky and dirty. Mostly though I felt fear." What was so frightening he recalls was his vulnerability, his "sense of powerlessness." He remembers for example:

Part of the confusion was that at the time I didn't like my parents very much and I told him about this. With him doing so many wonderful things--it was like giving candy to a baby and I guess he knew it. All I knew was that I got contact with a father-figure; someone who made it seem like the Brady Bunch and I wanted to keep on having the attention.

Richard, by being so forthright about his unhappiness with his family environment and his desire for a replacement for his father, essentially made himself open, available, and vulnerable to Jack who in turn willfully took advantage of him. Finding himself caught between wanting "Jack to adopt me" and yet clearly "not liking what he was doing" Richard on two separate occasions told Jack "no, I don't like you doing that." He found though that Jack either became quite persuasive about him not needing to be so afraid, or threatened to withdraw his affections. "He always" says Richard, "ended up getting me to not be so afraid of doing it."

Of his physical or physiological response, Richard says: "I did get an erection but I didn't really want to." He went on to clarify that the problem was not so much the "erection" as the concept of touching itself, an issue which was connected to his conflicting emotional desires of liking and not liking at the same time what Jack was doing and which was furthered by a basic lack of information.

Richard found for example that "the more I trusted that he was going to do all the things he said he was going to do (the more the) fondling didn't hurt." In some ways he found that "it even felt good." Consequently his fear level began to

diminish somewhat and he discovered instead that he wanted to reciprocate,"to give pleasure back." From Richard's standpoint this made sense because "Jack was doing so many wonderful things, I had all this affection I wanted to show because I finally felt that I could do that." For him "showing affection" and "giving pleasure back" meant "hugging" or "massaging Jack's shoulders," which he did once. Jack's interpretation though was that Richard was being "seductive," and therefore by implication, was to blame for whatever sexual transgressions he had committed. "When my parents didn't show any affection in front of us," states Richard, "I didn't know what the limitations were about showing affection between families or friends." He was thus reliant upon Jack for whatever reality or interpretation he chose to assign their experience together.

C. Coping Strategy. It is difficult to get a sense of Richard's method of coping with his experience because he does not express himself directly on the subject. He did at one point though state that the reason he doesn't remember how many times his brother was present was that he simply "blocked most of it out" so that he wouldn't be held responsible. It is possible then that Richard's struggle to remember many aspects of the abuse is an indication of the extent to which he has denied or blocked out the experience. Now that that is no longer necessary, he is finding that he is remembering with growing frequency, the scope of his victimization.

D: Ending/Meaning. The ending essentially came about for two reasons: because Jack began pressing Richard for more than he felt was acceptable, and because, despite Jack's assertion that what they were doing "was right," Richard couldn't get away from his inner sense that "what we were doing was wrong." As a

result he decided to check with his friends: "When I told my friends what was happening, they said he was a faggot and stuff like that: faggots do that. I realized that something was wrong because the word faggot I knew was bad." Their response combined with his own internal discomfort, helped decide him that he needed to do something about the nature of his relationship with Jack.

For so long as Jack confined his sexual demands to acts which Richard found somewhat tolerable and relatively inoffensive, (i.e., "touching and "fondling") the relationship had an uneasy symbiosis. It began to deteriorate however when Jack started "kissing" him and wanting to touch him with his clothes off. It deteriorated even further when Jack tried to get Richard to "sleep naked with him." For reasons which again had to do with the perceptions shared amongst his peers, "going to bed" was beyond Richard's tolerance. It was then that he told Jack that he "wanted to stop" and that he was "going to tell" his parents if they didn't. Richard remembers that: "Jack began to cry and do all sorts of things, trying to make me feel guilty. He offered to buy me a motorcycle, he offered to do all kinds of stuff." When those tactics appeared not to work, Jack turned to blaming Richard: "He said it was my fault in the first place that it had all happened. He said it was my fault that I seduced him, that I made him do it and all that and that no one was going to believe me." For Richard the accusation seemed frighteningly real: "When you are a kid and everything you do is taken into account...every time I showed affection to him...it began to look as though maybe everything I did was seductive."

Jack's statements were disconcerting too because he was without guidelines from within his own family as to what constituted appropriate touch and the

showing of affection and because his own feeling towards Jack were mixed. One part of him--"the part that was willing to put up with everything just to keep things going the way they were"--wanted to continue, while the other part wanted to stop. While this obviously was the part which in the end won out, Richard still needed answers to his many questions and doubts. Sometime following his confrontation with Jack he decided that he had to tell his mother:

When I told my parents I didn't know if I was a victim (of sexual abuse) or not. I just wanted to talk to someone who could understand what was going on. I felt like I had to tell them because I felt so dirty and I couldn't stop feeling dirty....They just rejected the whole idea and said I must have done something.

If Richard wasn't aware of being a victim prior to that conversation with his parents, he certainly was following it:

All of a sudden I felt like a victim because my parents didn't believe me. If anything did happen it was my fault. I knew in my heart that was wrong but I was up against my parents and they wouldn't take any kind of action. They were still seeing the person, still socializing with him, still inviting him over.

The impact of his parents refusal to believe him combined with the residual confusion and emotional disarray that arose out of his relationship with Jack contributed to Richard's subsequent sense of despair and anger:

I felt very weak. I didn't want to do anything. I tried to drop out of P.E. I didn't feel that I was normal. I didn't feel that I fit in, especially with the other boys. I felt very isolated, very angry. Angry at my parents, angry at God.

The act of not being believed was perhaps the most difficult to reconcile himself to at the time and says Richard, "really changed my relationship with my parents." The rift between them endured for many years and only recently have they been willing to discuss the matter again, and to acknowledge that they perhaps erred in not supporting or believing Richard at the time.

When asked what he felt had been most meaningful in terms of his sexual abuse experience, Richard's response indicated that it was his own sexuality which had been impacted the most. Because of what had occurred, he felt that "it really prevented me from coming out until I was 21; I always had this fear that I was going to abuse children." Part of the problem was that, "I didn't know until later the difference between homosexuality and paedophilia" and so wasn't able as an adolescent, to distinguish between himself and Jack. Knowing that he was "gay" and therefore attracted to men, and yet knowing too what his experience with Jack had been like, Richard was not only afraid of his own sexuality, he also for a long time didn't and to a lesser extent, still doesn't, trust older gay men. "In a lot of ways" he says, "it made me afraid of gay men and of older men. I won't let gay men get close to me because I don't trust them." It also posed a dilemma for him in terms of his ability to be with children. Having his boundaries violated he feared that he might have the potential to do the same to someone else. Ultimately, he thinks that he "would have felt a lot more comfortable, and less sexually confused" if he had not had the experience he did with Jack and therefore had not had his sexuality called into question at such a young age.

His self-image suffered too as he struggled to find acceptance at home and within himself for who he was and for his emerging sexuality. He recalls that he felt "very worthless" and sank into a period of depression that seemed to last from the time of his relationship with Jack until he "was 16 or so." In the past year or two his determination to overcome his low self-image has led him to take a number of positive steps including joining Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous and reporting his abuse to the police. Finding out as he did that Jack

was already under surveillance for suspicion of child molestation vindicated Richard both to himself and his parents and indicated that this was not as his parents had suggested, a one-time, isolated incident involving a lonely man and a naive boy.

E. Reflections. Although Richard had tried telling his parents at the time about the sexual abuse, and had essentially brought it to an end by saying "no more" to Jack, I wanted to know what it would have taken for him to tell someone else. He wasn't sure that he could have gone any further for two reasons: trust and shame. In the first instance Richard says: "I didn't know who else I could trust." He had tried his parents and had been unsuccessful and didn't know to whom else he could turn. His friends had let him know that Jack was "a fagot" but beyond that Richard thought that they "would not have been the right people because they didn't understand" its effect on him.

In the second instance Richard says, "because I was so afraid of the feelings...like the anger, the guilt, the shame, I tried to bury them. To talk anymore about it then was too painful."

Ernie

A. Engagement Phase. The engagement phase for Ernie had more to do with his religious and moral upbringing than with the chance meeting of a particular individual. His mother was a devout Catholic who found solace from what was for her a new, unfamiliar, and confusing world, in her religion. Wanting to raise Ernie to have the same religious morals and background, she sent him to a nearby Catholic School. Attached to the school was a Catholic Church which was run by Father Smith, who both served masses and taught regularly in the school.

Ernie recalls that, "I attended this school from grades one through five" whereupon his family moved to a different neighbourhood and he subsequently switched into the public school system. Before that point though and "in about grade four or five, I became an altar boy."

Becoming an altar boy was no small matter: indeed it was something which "all good Catholic boys wanted" and which Ernie too felt some pride in, despite his growing street-related activities. Aside from whatever parental approval it evoked, the rewards that were embedded in the position were strong incentives for Ernie: "Everybody wanted to be an altar boy; you got to skip classes, you got some money for doing weddings and funerals...it was a prestige thing."

Selection to join the ranks of altar boys was in the hands of Father Smith, who had created his own reward system for those who served in masses or generally helped out in the church, additional to that which flowed naturally from the status of altar boy. According to Ernie, "the rewards he would give for serving were part and parcel of his method of operation." He recalls that "basically the more masses you served and the more jo-jobs you did around the church, the more rewards you got." These were mostly in the form of "dinners,...baseball, football, or hockey games...sometimes weekend trips." Father Smith "kept score" so that of the "core of about 10 or 12 altar boys," those who "did more things, served more masses, or were his favorites," received preferential treatment.

Because of Father Smith's daily contact with the students, the availability of file information on each family, and his status within the Church and church-going community, Ernie thinks that "he was in a very powerful role." Thus it is likely

that the engagement phase for him presented as much as anything else, an abuse of power.

B. Sexual Abuse Phase. Somewhere between grade five or six, approximately one year following his initiation as altar boy, Ernie recalls that his relationship with Father Smith became sexual. "There were many times where nothing would happen because the other altar boys were there" says Ernie, "but over the two to two and a half years of being altar boy I can remember at least 12 and perhaps up to as many as 20 occasions when he would..."

Most of the time this consisted of "fondling," and once or twice he remembers Father Smith trying to "masturbate" him. The first time Father Smith touched him, was when they were "in his car in Stanley Park when it was dark." Another time "it was in a hotel room." They were there because Father Smith's T. V. had broken and so he decided to take a room in a local hotel for the purposes of watching a hockey game on T.V. As Ernie remembers the scene, "we had food brought up...he masturbated and fondled and touched me." There were also the occasional weekend trips to places such as Seattle or Harrison Hot Springs when Ernie would be alone with the priest and where again, he would be fondled and touched in a sexual way by Father Smith. At these times he felt especially helpless. "I felt powerless" states Ernie, "especially on weekend trips when I was dependent on him for virtually everything."

Most of the time the clothes were left on, but when they were away for weekend trips, it was "clothes off and sleeping together." Father Smith never seemed inclined to force Ernie into sexual acts that he couldn't tolerate, nor did he threaten him with physical force. According to Ernie, "the only implied threat

was of us going too far and risking all those goodies." When asked to clarify his statement, Ernie explained that it was more than just the rewards offered by Father Smith that were at stake. The subtle yet persuasive nature of Father Smith's reward system, his mother's close ties with the Church and his own insecurity about his family left him feeling vulnerable to what was happening:

The priest had a list of the altar boys. You got marks for what you did. At the end he (the priest) would post the marks. They would be associated with trips. My mother would encourage me to earn the points. The top 10 or 12 would get the biggest goodies. I felt like I couldn't say no. I'd be altar boy of the year. Between my mother and peer pressure, there was no escape. It would have jeopardized everything I had. I wasn't emotionally able to say no because I didn't have any security elsewhere to back me up.

In terms of "losing those goodies," it seemed preferable to Ernie to adopt a "wait and see" attitude and to go along with Father Smith rather than to say 'no' and risk finding himself isolated within his own community (i.e., the Church) and his family (i.e., from his mother).

Another aspect of the abuse which may have mitigated its impact was the way in which it progressed from fondling during "a ride home in the car," or the "movies," to open sexual manipulation without any clothes on during "day trips" and finally to sleeping together during "weekends away." Each time that Father Smith did something sexual was always just a little bit more demanding than the last time, but never so much so that Ernie was afraid or fearful for his own safety: "I knew it is wrong but we had already gone this far, so one step more wasn't going to be too bad."

Most of what Ernie felt, at least initially, was "confusion." Later, when they were on weekend trips together he felt "vulnerable." He thinks that he "was confused and didn't really understand what was happening because the sensations

and feelings were so new" and because he was "too young to appreciate what Father Smith was doing." Since Ernie "had never had any sex education," was unaware of what his own sexuality meant, and essentially "felt isolated" (from his family), he had only his limited knowledge and desire for affection to guide him.

Of this he says:

There was some confusion, some hesitation but at 11 or 12 my own sexuality hadn't developed yet. I didn't really understand what was happening because these were all new sensations and feelings to me. I knew it was wrong and I knew it wasn't good but he may well have been the first friend I ever had.

As it progressed, and "when we weren't in our home city," Ernie recalls that he "felt more vulnerable to it and had fewer safety spots." He was aware during those times that "it was up to him (Father Smith) to get me back, to feed me, to look after me."

Although he experienced "hesitation and confusion," Ernie also recalls that, "I made a conscious decision to go along, based on the state of mind I was in, and the information I had." That this is a decision that Ernie can recall making, is perhaps why he in retrospect, did not experience the same kind of personal dismay over his role as participant as was expressed by the others. He reconciled himself to the decision, by "never instigating" anything himself, and by letting it be known that "I didn't like what was going on and I felt uncomfortable." Recalls Ernie, "I knew it was wrong and tried to show that." While there was no actual physical pleasure in what Father Smith was doing, there was for Ernie, at least the pleasure of having an adult male companion. The priest after all, was "except for this one particular quirk or warp in his personality,...a fairly decent fellow."

That theirs was a relationship borne out of a power imbalance is quite clear to Ernie. Speaking of Father Smith, he says:

He basically knew all there was to know about me. He had access to the files, knew which kids had money and which were on low income. I served two to three masses per week with him plus he taught me two to three hours per week, so he knew a lot about me.

It is likely that Father Smith would have been aware of Ernie's family's financial difficulties, of his father's indiscretions, and perhaps even of his desire to "be like everybody else." As Ernie recalls: "I wanted to be normal like everybody else. Society reinforces this: should have nice toys, nice clothes, etc. I wanted nice things too like eating out and going to movies." Obviously these were things which Father Smith was willing to offer, at a price which Ernie decided within the context of the rest of what his life had to offer, was tolerable.

C. Coping Strategy. Ernie coped with his sexual abuse in a manner similar to how he reacted to many of the events which were a part of his life at the time; by closing himself off to the experience and the emotions: "I have over the last fifteen years drawn a boundary--this is past and this is present. My reaction then was to let the past be the past and not to deal with it."

By maintaining this philosophical posture, Ernie didn't have to think much about "what impact it did have." At the same time though, he knew that regardless of whatever "psychological barriers" he had imposed for all these years, that he would, "for my sake, if nobody else's," have to "come to terms with it sooner or later." Seeing Father Smith at the hockey game with a couple of young boys with him, when he (Ernie) was tired and his "defenses were down...broke the dam between past and present" and left him feeling "emotionally upset and vulnerable." Up until that moment in time, he had been able to shut the experience out of his mind though not out of his life or his memory.

D. Ending/Meaning. Ernie's relationship with Father Smith came to an end largely because Ernie's street-related activities and "rabble-rousing" ways were steadily drawing him further away from the influence of the Church. He remembers that "by the end I was getting into trouble with the law and the focus had moved from that neighbourhood (i.e., where the Catholic Church and School were located) to my new friends." Although he saw Father Smith "infrequently until grade 10 or 11," he had no more sexual contact with him after the age of 13 or 14." One of the reasons that I still attended church was that my brother had become an altar boy and I was kind of worried about him. I sort of said no overnight trips or something like this." However, Ernie felt that for his own peace of mind, he needed to keep an eye on Father Smith to verify that nothing more was going on. From what he could ascertain, "whether it was finances or he was genuinely afraid of getting caught, he had stopped taking kids to movies and he didn't have those little rewards anymore." Apparently then at some level, Ernie felt strongly enough about his own experience not to want his brother to go through the same.

When asked if he ever felt that he was a "victim," Ernie responded that victim wasn't quite the right word: "As a lawyer, a victim is someone who is completely defenseless and at risk. I could have walked away; I could have stopped it." He prefers instead to see himself as "a victim of circumstances: the first or second time I could maybe understand, but after that?" In other words, he thought that he could have perhaps stopped it had he not at the time "felt powerless and alone": powerless against peer pressure and Father Smith's more influential position in society and alone in the sense that he didn't feel any support or understanding from the adults in his life.

Ernie's experience of sexual abuse has had the most meaning, in terms of his relationships, especially those with men. While in general he finds that "it takes longer to get to know and trust others," with men he is especially aware of "some hostility inside or a feeling of uneasiness." This is strongest when he is "presented with a similar situation (to his own)--an older man with a very young boy or sometimes with more than one or two young boys."

Overall though, Ernie could not express ways in which his experience with Father Smith had meant more to him than any of his other growing-up experiences. In terms of self-image, self-confidence, ability to be comfortable with himself and with others in the world, Ernie felt that his adjustment had not been impaired in any significant way by his relationship with Father Smith. Nonetheless, he was aware that in the past he had been conscious of it especially when in the presence of children and has if anything, drawn back and become even more formal in his interactions with them, as if to ward off any possibility that he might in some way pass on Father Smith's legacy.

Despite his belief that he himself has not been strongly affected by the sexual abuse, Ernie has sought to protect other children from the same, by reporting Father Smith to the RCMP. His experience, while not devastating at an emotional level, has made him all the more aware of the potential for "abuse of power."

E. Reflections. As Ernie reflected upon the sexual abuse, it was clear that he regarded it as one more event in a childhood already littered with difficult experiences. As part of the past, it was not an issue that he consciously wanted to "deal with," other than to acknowledge that, "I should have done something

earlier" in terms of reporting to the police." Maybe not when I was 10 or 11," he says, "but when I was 16 or 17. If this was still going on with kids, I could have prevented that." Reporting was a part of his process of "coming to terms" with the experience ("if you can stop one more guy..."), and allowed him to let go and to once again relegate the past to the past.

Donald

A. Engagement Phase. For Donald there was no 'engagement' phase per se. No one took the time to "seduce" him, to win his friendship through the exchange of gifts and attention, or to in any other way manipulate his trust for their sexual needs. They simply took and acted afterwards as if nothing had happened. That this perhaps made the experience more stark and, therefore, more disturbing is certainly a strong possibility.

Although it is not uncommon in native culture for children to look to the extended family as if it were their own, in Donald's case, the loss of his immediate family was so sudden and came at such an early age that he felt as if he didn't belong, even with his relatives. Consequently, he felt as if he were without the simple rights of protection and security one might normally expect in childhood. As Donald states: "I think that from a very early age, with being passed around from relative to relative, I knew I had to be responsible for myself."

For these and other reasons the lead in to Donald's sexual victimization was circumstantial and probably stemmed as much from his environmental vulnerability as it did from his emotional vulnerability.

B. Sexual Abuse Phase. Donald's first memory of the sexualization of his body was when he was four years of age and living with an aunt: "I used to sleep in the same bed as her and when she was drunk she would take her body and rub my body all over her body." At other times too he would wake up and find her "fondling" him. While sleeping in the same bed seemed normal enough, the sexual contact didn't and he clearly remembers that "it was scary" and that as a result he became afraid not only of his aunt but of her drinking as well.

Fortunately that particular living arrangement lasted only a few months and then he was sent to live with an uncle who "had a piano and a musical family" and who made life "seem sane" again. For some reason though this too lasted only a short while and Donald was then sent to live with yet another uncle, this time one who lived on a fish boat in a slightly more remote setting. Here Donald again experienced sexual molestation. He explains that "with my uncle it happened just twice," pauses for a moment and says, "just twice, twice was a lot!" He remembers that what his uncle did was to "just sort of rub his penis over my body and fondle me bit." Though Donald felt as frightened as he had the first time, his reaction was different—"I laughed because it seemed pretty ludicrous that this was happening." Was it a laughable experience? Donald recalls that it was not: "I laughed because I didn't know what else to do...because I wasn't allowed to cry; men don't cry you know." Laughing it seems was Donald's way of crying: "I cried by laughing or just complete silence and sometimes I would just shut down altogether." His uncle's reaction was not to stop says Donald, it was to "put his hand over my mouth." Whether it was a symbolic gesture or meant solely for the moment, Donald got the message and endured his uncle in silence.

By this time Donald was five years old and his experiences to that point "were mostly just like that, people who would rub their bodies on mine." In other words, it may have felt frightening and difficult to understand, but it wasn't to a point yet of being really intolerable or violent.

At one time native children, especially those living in remote areas, were routinely sent to residential schools for their education. These were comparable to boarding schools, in that the children lived, ate, and studied there and went home only on weekends or vacations. A major difference though was the cultural separation between teachers and students. The teachers were mostly "white" while the children were entirely "native." The distinction served as an artificial barrier between pupils and teachers, and for Donald, meant that just as before he was on his own and without adult protection. It was at the residential school that his experience of sexual abuse continued, although with some differences which caused it to feel more threatening than it had previously.

School began in September and in late November, just after Donald's sixth birthday, he was molested "in the shower room by somebody who was 13." He remembers that "that is when it started to get really scary because then it was 13, 14 and 15 year old boys who were molesting me and there was penetration and physical abuse." For the first time he was verbally threatened and was told: "Keep your mouth shut or I'll beat you up."

The telling differences for Donald were in the verbal threats and the anger expressed through the abuse itself. This he thought "was no longer the act of somebody who was going to look after me tomorrow and make sure I ate. This was somebody who was strange and who I didn't know." Previously he had believed

that "this is what people do when they like you," an association that as a child made sense because then it had been relatives who were performing some kind of caretaking role, not just abusing him. When it began to be older boys though whose sole purpose had nothing to do with Donald's well-being, the association no longer fit and the experience took on a different meaning.

There were two principle boys who "for two years" whenever they and Donald were in the bathroom alone together, would sexually abuse him. It got so that Donald didn't know whether he would be safe or not when he went to the bathroom. As a result he says, "I started having a lot of bathroom problems; I was afraid to go to the bathroom at night; I was afraid to go in the day; I was afraid to ask to go to the bathroom in school." A good part of Donald's fear was connected to the sexualization of his body. He remembers that "a lot of it was that I was afraid that people would know that I had that part of my body--or that they would know that that was happening to me."

Unable to control his own bodily functions Donald remembers this as the time when he first "started to understand about shame and humiliation." It was an understanding and a feeling that carried even more weight later on in his life when he realized his victimization as well as the meaning of the jokes amongst the other children:

I started understanding the joking more with other kids and realized that I was the joke. When you are a kid and know what the jokes mean because it has happened to you, you start becoming beaten. I became extremely aware of shame and humiliation.

Although the sexual abuse went on for the entire time that Donald was at residential school, he never tried to stop it either on his own or by telling an adult. His reasons for maintaining his silence were that he "felt helpless" and as if "there

was nothing I could do." In addition Donald remembers that: "I never stopped feeling that if I did (tell) that they wouldn't just say it was my fault, that I had somehow done something to cause myself all this grief." Whether Donald was aware of the meaning of sexual abuse or not, it is apparent that by an early age he was feeling victimized enough to accept that he was the root cause for all his problems.

C. Coping Strategy. Donald coped with his life experiences and especially those concerning his sexual victimization through denial and play-acting. In denial Donald was able to avoid what was happening to him and even to pretend that it wasn't happening. Through acting out different personalities such as that of class clown or prankster, he was able to cover-up his real feelings and to win approval through self-effacement.

Of his ability to deny his molestation experiences, Donald says:

The secret (about sexual abuse) was very powerful. The ability to deny it was very powerful too. It was easy to accept when the offender said 'Don't tell,' because already it was so awful, I didn't want to say anything.

Unfortunately the sense of power Donald gained through his denial, was spurious and probably more accurately reflected how little support he perceived in his environment and how difficult was the notion that someone would actually believe his story were he to tell it. In the short term it was easier to simply ally himself with those who were doing the abusing and to accept their threats not to tell.

The need for secrecy extended beyond Donald's time at the residential school to include his return to his native village, where in some settings the sense of victimization continued. When Donald for instance watched his sister being sexually molested when she was 10 years of age, by the 14 year old son of her

foster parents, he again drew on the power--this time shared by all three individuals--to deny and to say "oh, that didn't happen, what are you talking about?" Afterwards when they all went "for pop and candy" and pretended that everything was o.k., that too seemed normal. "By then," says Donald, "anyone was free game in my mind." Not only had denial become a routine response, so too had the image of victimization.

The play-acting that Donald did was mostly through his role as class clown. He distinctly remembers that: "I was always joking and was always making a fool of myself and clowning about." Despite outward appearances though, Donald on the inside knew that, "I felt helpless in school...I didn't really care that much for myself." While the joking and laughter-making was a way of hiding his pain, Donald knew too that the "prankster carries on that way because they are helpless. It was a way of covering up that helplessness." It also became a way of confirming what he already believed: "that I was useless and stupid."

Acting and theatre were natural extensions for the jokester and were additional avenues by which Donald could create a separate reality for himself. By taking on a new character or personality, he could, at least for a short while, believe in something other than his own existence. He remembers that "through it all I found that being funny was safe because then they couldn't hurt me."

D. Ending/Meaning. The end to Donald's sexual abuse came with his departure from the residential school when he was around ten years old. In the time that he had been in the school, the sexual victimization had become routinized to the point that he gradually came to find its predictability tolerable.

When Donald left the residential school and went to live in a foster home, life again took on a semblance of order and the sexual abuse stopped. Unfortunately it was replaced with routine physical beatings. The memory of his sexual abuse experiences continued though as Donald began to act out some of the issues such as bathroom problems and poor self-esteem. Because much of his life had in a sense, been steeped in chaos and acts of aggression, it is almost a moot point as to whether his issues stemmed more from the incidents of sexual abuse than from any of his other experiences. Donald, however, was quite emphatic that his sexual victimization had indeed played a significant role in his life. He felt, for example, that his experience may have meant the most in terms of his own sexuality and relationships with others.

Although for a long time he "just tried to ignore that anything had happened," he could not ignore the confusion he felt about his own sexuality: "I believed that I was a homosexual...until I started feeling that it wasn't a good experience, that it was abusive, and that it was a continuation of believing that I had to please somebody to be worthwhile, and to live." Until more recently this meant that his relationships with men were mostly "sexual, pretty destructive, and pretty much, 'I hate myself/I hate you.'" For a time they were based solely on monetary transactions as well. Once he stopped being in relationships with men this changed, although he acknowledges that he still basically does not feel safe when he is with them. On the other hand, Donald thought that he had always been able to "be friends" with women and to create positive relationships with them. In order to achieve this though he has had to maintain a posture of sexual neutrality and says:

I'm not ready to accept sexual intimacy. I get scared about the sense of control and being controlled and I sabotage. It is getting easier to at least talk about it though.

In other words, Donald thinks that he does best, both personally and sexually when he can keep himself at a distance and not get intimately involved with an individual of either sex.

E. Reflections. In reflecting upon his childhood experience of sexual abuse, Donald tried to imagine what he would have said to someone had he believed that that was a possibility:

I would like to have been able to say I don't like living there--it hurts. I do not like the way that person touches me. But for me all the time I felt like I did not have a choice...I wasn't going to kill myself so I thought let's just accept it and get on with it.

Because of the magnitude of what he went through as a child, Donald's process of reclaiming himself has been slow, agonizing and difficult. What stood out though was his determination to continue the process and his belief that this above all else had had a great deal of meaning in his life.

Lionel

A. Engagement Phase. The engagement phase for Lionel, involving as it did, both his sister and brother-in-law, started off as a seemingly ordinary family affair. Lionel's sister who was only four years older than himself, became involved with a man (Sam) who was about 18 or 19 years of age at the time. They spent a lot of time together either at Sam's parents' house or at Lionel's parents' home. The amount of time that he spent with his sister and Sam in the few months prior to the actual sexual molestation, stood out for Lionel:

I was the one allowed to come along, or taken along. I remember that my sister would go out to his parents' place and I got to go along. This was before they got married. After they got married they had me over all the time.

For Lionel then, it was not an issue of having been deliberately pulled into something, it was simply that he was aware of being a part of his sister's life and that meant going with her as often as possible whenever she left the house. Says Lionel, "it was not a matter of gifts, it was the attention and getting to go somewhere (that counted)."

At the same time, it was during this phase of the relationship between the three of them that Lionel first remembers any kind of sexual contact. It was a relatively minor incident that occurred before his sister and Sam were married and when the three of them were together: "I remember being at his house with her and she lifted the blankets when he was there to show me his erect penis and what he looked like. Then she said something like: "Would you like some?." Lionel is not sure what happened next, or what it was that he did but he doesn't think that anything more of a sexual nature took place. He remembers, however, feeling uncomfortable about the vague sexual invitation which seemed to have been proffered, but which at the time did not make sense.

B: Sexual Abuse Phase. A few months later Lionel's sister and Sam got married. She was only 16 years old but she was pregnant which is what, according to Lionel, precipitated the marriage. For a few months they lived with Sam's parents, but when Lionel's father was posted to the Middle East for one year, they came to live with Lionel, his mother and his two brothers.

While the first incident had involved sexual innuendo and was somewhat vague in Lionel's memory, the next incident stood out clearly." I remember," he says, "exactly everything that happened; where it was, what he was wearing, how it happened and so on." What he recalls is that:

I was 12 and Sam was about 19. Everyone had gone to bed. We had been watching T.V. and then somehow we started wrestling. And then after wrestling he lay on the couch on his stomach and I got on his back with my stomach on his back. At that point he started to squeeze his buttocks together and I got excited. That was something new. He was aware of it too and asked me: 'Do you want to touch it?' Then I think I reached for him. He just let it continue.

The remainder of the experience faded from memory again as Lionel acknowledged that "that is the point where I start to forget and where the pain comes in." It is painful because what comes to mind next is a vision of them on the couch together without any clothes on, in the performance of oral sex.

The first couple of incidents seemed to establish the sexual nature of their relationship and soon thereafter Sam was encouraging and making possible regular, weekly sexual contact which included acts of "mutual masturbation," "oral sex," and "rubbing the penis between the buttocks." Recalls Lionel, "whenever we were alone together it would happen. He would get an erection and that would be a sign" (for Lionel to begin masturbation). An additional though silent participant was Lionel's sister who, though not directly involved, continued to enable his contact with Sam by always sending Lionel to find Sam when she needed him, or by sending him to get Sam for breakfast. Invariably they ended up in some kind of sex act together. For example, whenever Lionel would get Sam up for breakfast, he knew that Sam expected him to do something. Lionel's memory of it is that: "It was mostly by signals. Nothing was said; it was just in the movements and then I would lift the covers and start playing with him." This occurred with such regularity that Lionel knew that he was reading Sam's signals correctly.

The other place where Lionel and Sam had routine sexual contact was in the car." He would get an erection," remembers Lionel, "and I would know, that's the

signal. Then I would undo his pants and I would do the rest." How it was that Sam was always the one to drive him, Lionel couldn't say, but he did remember that "that was when it would happen most."

The pace of sexual molestation continued unabated for about one year. Then they were caught. Lionel remembers that once again it was a matter of him having been sent upstairs to get Sam up:

Sam pretended to be asleep so it was me. He was in the bed and I was outside the bed so I took the blame for that. It was my fault. He said that I always did it and he didn't know what to do about it, and that he had nothing to do with it and so on.

Lionel's family reacted first by denying that anything had happened and subsequently by blaming Lionel. His sister's response was: "He's all I've got...he never did it." His older brother yelled and accused him of "trying to ruin everything" and of "trying to ruin everybody," while his mother took him to the Doctor where he was asked such questions as: "Do you have a girlfriend?" For Lionel the feeling was one of betrayal and blame." I always wondered how my brother aligned himself with Sammy so strongly that he hated me so much and saw me as being the one to ruin everything. I didn't think it was true," he says, but it was difficult as a 13 year old, without any other input or information, to combat the message that he was to blame for what had happened,

When, after everything had died down, Lionel found that his relationship with Sam "still went on" as before, he felt especially confused. His sister's behavior was particularly difficult to understand because it was she who continued to send Lionel to locate Sam:

Go get Sam for this...can you go find Sam...Lionel go wake Sam up for supper. All the time, even after the first time when we were caught.

It seemed to him that the message was to continue as before, but he wasn't sure why or what it was that the rest of the family was getting out of it. Says Lionel:

I knew though that I had to be quiet about things; I knew I had to watch myself; that I couldn't let anybody know about this.

Although Sam and Lionel's sister moved out within the year, the sexual contact between Sam and Lionel continued. Because of the change in living arrangements, the car increasingly became the meeting place. Sam still gave Lionel rides when he needed to go somewhere and Lionel still agreed to go with him. He remembers a time though when he finally decided that he had reached his limit and simply "didn't want it to happen anymore." He decided that now was the time to say "no," at least to his sister. He had called home for a ride and she answered:

I said to my sister on the phone: 'Will you come and get me?' She said: 'Oh Sammy will.' And I said: 'No, will you come?' I remember that this was the time when I was saying as clearly as I could, 'No!' I think she knew that something was wrong.

Lionel felt that he had stated "No" as strongly as he could and when it was ignored, he felt "a resignation that this is going to go on." At that point, he lost his courage and "didn't know how to say no again; not to the ride, to getting in the car, or to Sam." He never thought of being direct or to the point, since that wasn't the standard of communication that had been established by his family or with Sam, and so he continued instead to rely on the indirect messages which were so common in his family but which were also easily ignored: "I didn't like what was going on anymore but nobody else listened to my message."

In part Lionel's prevarication or loss of conviction may have been a manifestation of his uncertain feelings about the experience itself." Physically I

may have enjoyed it," he says, "but the emotions were too much; the guilt and sense of hatred and dislike and so on." In other words while the physical sensation was gratifying, it alone was no longer sufficient to compensate for his judgments about himself and his involvement nor for the sense of self-hatred that arose as a result.

C. Coping Strategy. Lionel's way of adapting to his experience with Sam was to isolate it; to fit it in as one more event in his life. Says Lionel, "It was something that would happen and then after it was over, I would just forget about it." In a sense he denied the existence of that aspect of his life, in part because that was how he chose to accommodate Sam's presence, and in part because of his own ambiguity over the notion of responsibility:

My life was compartmentalized. I knew it was happening but it wasn't a big issue. When it was over it was over. Nobody was to know that part. I knew that something was wrong, that I was a victim of something, but my difficulty was that I always felt the instigator; I always felt responsible for it.

Even though Lionel could just "shut it off" and deny that anything sexual was occurring, at another level he not only knew about it, he felt as if he were the responsible party. His perception with regard to the latter may have stemmed from the blurring of his role and the gradual diminishment of the boundaries between himself as victim and Sam as offender. It was, for example, difficult to tell during the waking-up ritual whether it was Sam who was the initiator or Lionel and since they relied so much on indirect messages and silent signals, there was rarely anything tangible by which to assess the situation.

A separate yet related factor was Lionel's role as the "happy" child and family "peacemaker." He recalls for instance that: "I was what I thought was

happy; I had other things that were giving me successes and building me up in other ways." Thus the avoidance of that which was traumatic was made all the more possible. His role as "peacemaker" also made it a necessity. Although he had the potential to expose the family secret he could not do so without violating and contradicting his own role and perhaps losing his place. Furthermore, his sister had already told him that Sam "was all she had." This he took as an indirect plea for him to remain silent, thereby helping her maintain her life as well as the unity of the family. So it was for many reasons that Lionel chose to "compartmentalize" his life and to keep the door shut on that particular compartment.

D. Ending/Meaning. The inner conflict that Sam's sexual molestation of him caused, was not something that Lionel acknowledged until he was older. As stated previously, the experience initially was "very exciting and really enjoyable." But as Lionel says, it went on "until I was 18 years of age" by which time the simple physiological pleasure had long been surpassed by an inner sense of turmoil and doubt.

The ending itself came about because Lionel attempted to commit suicide. The reason for choosing suicide as an option was, as he puts it, because "Sam had continued to go on and I didn't like it anymore." The problem was that despite no longer wanting to be a party to the experience, he seemed unable to say "No" in a clear and succinct enough manner to halt it.

While he was in the hospital recovering, Lionel's sister visited him to say again that "Sam was all she had and I was responsible for everything." As before Lionel accepted that charge of responsibility and agreed that it was indeed his

fault. In retrospect he thought that he had acquiesced because he was physically weak and because he thought that she was right—"he wasn't much but he was all she had." A more likely possibility is that he simply stayed within his role as peacemaker and protected her and everyone else from what they did not want to acknowledge.

Following the suicide attempt, Lionel moved to Vancouver with his parents and his sister and husband moved to a different province. This broke the relationship and provided Lionel the space and time to come to terms with what had happened.

Three features of the sexual abuse stood out for Lionel and seemed to have had the most meaning in terms of impact: the collusion of his family, the coming to terms with his role and hence his culpability and the acceptance of his sexuality.

One of the more contentious issues Lionel tried to understand was that of the role of his family, and in particular that of his mother and sister. Of his sister he says: "She was the real enabler because even when she knew what was going on, she would send me to wake him up." Although his mother's role wasn't as clear to him, Lionel thought that she knew as well as did he that this was not the first time for Sam, that he had a prior conviction for the sexual assault of two or three young girls. His analysis though, was that it was just too out-of-character for her to defy the authority of an adult man, and to side with a young child, especially where it was a question of sex and sexuality--topics which she was loathe to discuss even under normal circumstances:

She didn't want to believe it. How could a woman who is in a position of being subservient to a strong, dominant man, with a daughter that she is trying to raise somewhat the same...go against a

male in favour of this little child. Well, the child is the one who's got to be the one who is the problem.

Compounding the fact that he felt as if there was an indirect message to proceed as before, Lionel also felt that all the blame was being focused on him: "The anger was always directed at me. I never sensed any directed at him (Sam)." It was not a blame that he accepted in the long run, but it left him wondering "what it was that was being gotten out of it by everybody else" that they were so willing to absolve Sam of any of the responsibility, and to view the adolescent as being both culpable and capable of forcing the adult to do something he supposedly did not want to do.

In so far as his role was concerned, Lionel's feelings were mixed. On the one hand he had physically enjoyed and "found exciting" the sexual molestation and on the other he knew that that had caused him to do things which as an adult he no longer saw as being appropriate:

Thinking that it was bad was the hard part. It didn't feel bad, that's been part of the problem. At the time I thought it was really different but at some point I knew it wasn't right.

It had been the 12 year old though who had found it exciting. As he got older it became less so and was instead supplanted with feelings of "guilt," "dislike," and "self-hatred."

Of his sexuality, Lionel recalls that one of the reasons why he didn't want to continue anymore with Sam, was that "my sexuality was too confused." He was experiencing "physiological pleasure," but "emotional confusion," knowing that he was attracted to men and yet not liking the nature of his relationship with Sam. What he required was the ability to decide for himself what his sexuality was going to be, without the pressure and confusions that arose out of the molestation.

Says Lionel: "My philosophy is that you're not responsible until you know what for. Not until I could make the decisions for myself (re: being homosexual) did it feel o.k." And not until he was clear of Sam did he feel that he had a chance to begin that decision-making process.

E. Reflections. Lionel saw his molestation by Sam as having been an unfair experience--something that he was as a child, ill-equipped to protect himself from:

I definitely don't like what he (Sam) did; I was too young. It was unfair. I don't think it was fair because you've got to give children more of a chance than that. It is tough enough without doing or having that happen to them to make it even more difficult.

For the most part his perception was "you either have to live with it or you will die" and so that essentially is what he did--he lived with the experience, enjoyed some aspects of it initially, ended up not liking it anymore after a few years, bore the brunt of the responsibility for it from his family, and finally, dealt with it by compartmentalizing and thereby reducing its significance. While his experience of sexual abuse had been extremely important to him, he also thought that it had been his "excuse for years" and that now that that "was no longer necessary," it could be seen as a significant event and one that he was still angry about, but that it also no longer had to overwhelm him or consume his energy.

PART FOUR

The General Structure of the Participants Experience and Responses

A. Engagement Phase

The engagement of each participant was most evident when the abuse was extrafamilial. Lloyd, Ernie, and Richard, for example, were all sexually molested by men who were not otherwise connected to their families but who either had standing in the community (i.e., Father Smith), or who had achieved legitimacy within the family (i.e., Vince). The establishment of a relationship, and more importantly of a trust, was what most identified this stage in as much as it was crucial to what was to follow. It was, for example, a time when the offenders came to know a lot about the victims and their individual weaknesses or desires through little more than the promise of attention or excitement (e.g., Robert). As the victim's needs for attention and affection were realized, their trust in the relationship grew stronger.

When the abuse was initiated by someone from within the family, as it was in Lionel's case, there was no need to take as much time to establish a reward system or even a relationship. The latter could be assumed and other means could be brought to bear on the victim which would negate the need for rewards but which would nonetheless ensure cooperation (i.e., family pressure or collusion).

When the family itself was absent as it was in Donald's case, then the vulnerability was both internal and external in nature. Standing alone as he did, there was no need for anyone to take the time to establish a relationship or to achieve legitimacy because there was no one who was clearly responsible for his well-being.

B. Sexual Abuse Phase

In the sexual abuse phase, it became evident that the attention, affection, or material rewards which were being offered, came with a price. Sex became a commodity which was, in the absence of real love or affection, bought or exchanged for emotional or material rewards. If the child wanted one, he had to give the other. Having to make such a difficult choice presented a moral and emotional dilemma for the participants. At the time this was variously expressed as confusion, uncertainty, or a feeling of helplessness. Richard, for example, was aware that that which Jack was offering both emotionally and materially was something which he desperately wanted. To say "No" to it was more than he was capable of even though the price was the sexualization of his body and affection. Lloyd too was caught between enjoying the friendship and attention he got from Vince and disliking his sexual demands. Ernie wanted what Father Smith was offering as well, although in his case because of his greater "street awareness," he was not as surprised at the notion of trading sexual favours for certain material rewards. For most though it was not a matter of willingness but rather a matter of feeling as if they had no choice.

At some point the participants realized that their trust had been violated and that they had been betrayed or tricked by the very adults they had come to believe. This betrayal was important in as much as it indicated to each that they couldn't trust their own judgment let alone protect themselves from violation.

The sense of betrayal came alive at different times for each participant. Lloyd, for example, first connected it to his geographic vulnerability (i.e., when being away from home coincided with being sexually molested), while Richard

found that his parents' refusal to believe his story was a far greater betrayal than the one he experienced with Jack. For Lionel the telling moment was when his family chose to believe in his brother-in-law's innocence and to place on him the full weight of responsibility for their sexual transgression. When it became apparent to him that they were being covertly encouraged to continue their relationship, the sense of betrayal deepened. Donald's sense of betrayal was generalized to include his entire environment, whereas for Ernie it was presented as an abuse of power as well as a lack of environmental (parental) support.

Unable to protect themselves or their bodily boundaries, the participants quickly came to regard themselves as vulnerable and incapable of rectifying what was essentially an imbalance of power. Some of the participants subsequently began to take on more active roles in their abuse and seemed to virtually become willing partners. In the short term this probably made sense because it was at least a way of appearing to regain personal power and environmental control. Unfortunately it also made it increasingly difficult for the victims to distinguish between themselves and the offenders.

The blurring of boundaries led to considerable confusion, particularly over the issue of responsibility. Lloyd felt especially caught by this and even 20 years later found it hard to distinguish between his limits of responsibility as a child and Vince's broader mantle of responsibility as an adult. What seemed to escape everyone--not just Lloyd--was that they had not been responsible for setting the situation up in the first place, nor were they responsible for the sexualization or perversion of the relationship that followed. Something which perhaps mitigated against a general understanding of this concept was their age; most considered themselves old enough to be accountable in some way.

Blame and/or the need for secrecy were additional factors in the overall experience. Blame was essentially a way of shifting responsibility from adult to child, from one equipped to handle it, to one uncertain of its source. When Richard confronted Jack, for example, he was told that it was his fault and that he, not Jack had been the initiator. The same occurred for Lionel when he was blamed by his family for what it was that he was doing to Sam. Being told that they were responsible at the same time that they were feeling powerless to halt the abuse, added to the already convoluted nature of the experience. How could one be responsible and culpable as well as powerless?

The need for secrecy arose both out of ignorance and fear. When the only information available to the participants was that which was provided by the offender, and when that person was insinuating blame, then the participants were inclined to believe in the adult's reality, to accept their own guilt instead and to remain silent.

When blame wasn't openly implied, it was anticipated and keeping the secret was just as important. Lloyd, for example, who did not necessarily feel blamed by Vince, did nonetheless perceive a need to remain silent about that part of his life. In his case it was because he lacked confidence in his family's willingness or ability to either listen to or support him. Ernie likewise felt a need to keep his experience a secret. For him it was both a matter of lack of confidence in the adults in his life, and of his own uncertainty that he wasn't at fault, or at least old enough to be able to get away from it. Donald too saw the issues of responsibility and silence as being interconnected. Since he couldn't be sure that if he did tell, he wouldn't just be told that it was his fault, and since he already found "the

experience so awful I didn't want to talk about it,..." he similarly saw little reason to break his silence or to disclose his secret.

When the issues of blame, secrecy, and responsibility weighed down heavily enough, feelings of shame or guilt started to surface. This was especially true for Donald who specifically recalled feeling "ashamed" and "humiliated" that that which the other children joked about was something which he had personally experienced. Richard likewise felt ashamed and humiliated and even wanted to withdraw from interactions with his peers once the experience with Jack was over.

With the exception of Donald, a constant theme for the participants was that of having in some ways enjoyed the sexual contact and of having eventually become a party to it. Out of this arose feelings of guilt and anger for not having done something to stop the abuse earlier or for having allowed themselves to be trapped by it. For Richard and Lloyd, the anger went beyond their own involvement, to include their parents for having failed in their duties as adults, to protect them.

C. Coping

Coping strategies were varied but were nonetheless well-defined. While they may not have been understood in the moment, in retrospect each individual was able to independently and without direction, identify ways in which he had accommodated or adapted to the experience. In the absence of available alternatives, coping became the standard means for dealing with their sexual molestation. The challenge was in finding ways to make the experience tolerable, despite the sexual demands, sense of betrayal, and confusion that it engendered.

Lloyd was perhaps the most articulate about his survival techniques, remembering sadly how he became passive, pretended it wasn't occurring, withdrew, and finally, rationalized it as something that was both a tolerable and fairly minor part of the overall relationship.

Lionel's method was to isolate, and to "compartmentalize" the experience so that it could be more easily denied. His other response was to maintain an aura of happiness and to take on the role of "family peacemaker." If one part of his life was less than perfect, he could make up for it by shutting it out while at the same time making the rest of his life seem wonderful by comparison.

Denial, blocking out, and relegating the experience to the past were all methods employed at some point by the participants (i.e., Richard, Ernie, Lionel). Denial came in the form of pretending that the sexual abuse wasn't occurring, was bearable, or wasn't out of line with the rest of one's life. Ernie, for example, mostly saw his experience within the context of the latter; it was difficult but then so were many of his other experiences at the time. Once they were over, he placed them in the category of the "past" and tried to think no more of them.

Donald's method of coping was singular and distinctive, and as with Lloyd, was something which he could readily identify. He took on the role of prankster and pretended, at his own expense, that everything was fine. He also accepted, at the behest of the offenders, the need to deny that anything inappropriate was taking place. Ironically, learning how to cope effectively with the experience meant hiding it and cloaking it in secrecy, which in itself meant that the feelings of victimization which the participants were trying to minimize were in fact prolonged.

D. Ending/Meaning

Bringing an end to the sexual abuse was not something that most participants were capable of on their own. The exception to this was Richard who, when he at last decided that Jack's demands were becoming intolerable, did choose to say "No" in a direct fashion (others tried to do the same indirectly, but without success). Otherwise the termination of the abuse bore little relationship to its intensity and had more to do with extraneous factors such as the child reaching puberty, or one or both of the parties moving away. With termination not being a decision that was consciously made and acted upon, participants could not identify within themselves that they had "taken charge," and thus could not in any way say that they had affected the outcome.

Meaning and the attachment of meaning to the experience itself tended to reflect impact: that which the participants found to be meaningful about their experience had a lot to do with how much they felt they had been affected by it. This in turn was related to the issues of betrayal, shame, humiliation, personal responsibility, or sexual perversion, mentioned previously.

Shame, for example, was expressed as feelings of worthlessness and may have been acted out as self-deprecating behavior. In Donald's case this meant playing the jokester; the one everyone could laugh at. Later it meant turning to male prostitution as a way of playing out the issues. Not only did this reinforce his negative judgment of himself, it also meant a long and difficult struggle to overcome his inner messages and to begin to feel good about himself. Hence, for him the meaning of his sexual abuse experience was synonymous with poor self-esteem, shame, and a fear of genuine sexual and emotional intimacy.

The issue of sexuality held a major place in their reflections on the meaning of the experience. The act of being sexually abused created confusion at a time when sexuality and sexual identity were just becoming topical and when clarity and guidance were most needed. For those who were becoming aware of an underlying homosexual urge (i.e., Richard, Lionel), the ability to freely explore sexual issues was particularly important. As it was homosexuality and sexual abuse became intertwined such that being "gay" had a potentially negative connotation and probably prolonged the struggle to achieve sexual acceptance.

For others (i.e., Lloyd), it was a matter of balancing what appeared to be a homosexual experience against emerging heterosexual desires. Lacking accurate information on either sexual matters or sexual abuse issues, (i.e., paedophilia) it was largely up to each individual to create his own meaning and understanding of this aspect of his experience. Until there were enough other experiences to counteract that of the sexual abuse, resolving one's sexuality was a difficult matter.

The exchange of affection for sex similarly contained a powerful and confusing message in as much as it demonstrated that one's feelings and emotions were exploitable and dispensable. The feeling was that they had been betrayed and that aside from the sexual intent, the relationship on the whole had been fraudulent and meaningless (e.g., Richard, Ernie, Lloyd). Not only were the participants left with negative images of sexual intimacy, they also, on the whole found it difficult to be open, vulnerable and trusting in their subsequent personal relationships.

A related factor in the issue of sexuality, was that of personal participation. The act of "joining in" or of responding physically or emotionally to the sexual manipulation and the relationship, left each in his own way feeling compromised. This gave rise to expressions of self-doubt and uncertainty about personal responsibility. The inner tension was audible as each attempted to strike a balance between present knowledge and awareness and past memories and experiences.

Ultimately everyone, save Ernie, saw their abuse experience as having been powerful and meaningful. No one could say precisely what that meaning was, but they could identify the various ways in which it had impacted on their later behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships, and sexuality. Each one saw his experience as being very personal and not one which was easily or readily shared. That which Lionel gently termed an "unfair" experience, had for the most part, been a traumatic life-event.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter discussion will focus on five areas: general conclusions which may be drawn from the data; the extent to which the assumptions as stated in Chapter Three, were either met or unfounded; the relationship of this study to findings from previous research efforts ; implications for further research and, finally; implications for counselling.

General Conclusions

The five males who participated in this study represented a diverse cultural ethnicity. One was Native American, one was of Caucasian-Chinese heritage, one was European born though raised in Canada, and one had lived throughout Canada and West Germany.

In terms of life-style one participant had been married and had two daughters by this liaison. The others had neither married nor had children. Two considered themselves homosexuals and one considered himself bisexual.

All of the men had been sexually abused by an adult male. In addition one had been sexually molested by older children in a residential school setting. The abuse lasted anywhere from a few months to a few years. The offenders were for the most part able to engage the participants with offers of friendship and material rewards. By exploiting their positions of trust or power vis a vis the

families or society, they were able to impose their greater will to keep the relationships going.

In general it was found that the experience had been upsetting in the moment for at least two of the men, and that it had become more disconcerting with the passage of time for two others. One participant, however, seemed not to have attached any more importance to this particular experience than to any of his other childhood experiences.

Most of the participants indicated that they eventually became parties to their own abuse by becoming complacent to it. This gave rise to feelings of self-doubt, guilt, and embarrassment for having been caught by the relationship, for not having clearly ended it, or for perhaps having enjoyed some portions of it. Indeed the tension that was expressed between wanting some aspects of the relationship and yet not being able to say "No" to the sexual demands, and between the current judgments and past behaviours, was a central theme in their collective remembrances.

It was noted as well that the participants displayed similar patterns with respect to coping strategies and vulnerability to the abuse. In other words, most identified some means by which they had learned to cope with their experience. In addition most indicated that weak family relationships overall and a weak father-son relationship in particular may have contributed to the feeling of emotional vulnerability which seemed to exist at the time the abuse began.

My Assumptions in Relation to the Data

In Chapter Three I presented a number of my assumptions and expectations for the data. It comes as no surprise that while some were well-founded, others were either too broad to be determined by this study alone, or could not be substantiated.

I had originally expected that the men would speak out in anger about the violation of their bodies and would clearly label the offender as the antagonist. However, only Richard and Donald indicated that they thought the offender had been in the wrong. The others indicated instead an uncertainty about whether the offender had been solely to blame as well as confusion over their possible role in its continuation. When I asked about the lack of anger, one (Richard), responded that he was trying to gain some control over the issue and had found from past experience that getting angry did not help. Others claimed to either not feel a sense of anger anymore or to generally want to get beyond that.

As for the sense of violation, only one person (Donald) thought that his experience had been violent such that he felt personally as well as physically violated. For the others, because the abuse was an integral component of a close relationship, the sexual contact, rather than being perceived solely as a physical violation, became more of a subtle moral and emotional dilemma. When I considered their responses overall, I tentatively concluded that perhaps sameness in gender and genitalia between victims and offenders, in combination with the seductive nature of the relationships, had led to the whole experience being less intrinsically frightening, or physically traumatic than it so often is for young girls. Whether this would stand up over time though, could only be determined through additional research.

Since most of the participants had been quietly pulled into the relationship, and in fact found that it gave them the friendship, attention, and rewards that they so desired, it was difficult for them to subsequently extricate themselves from the situation and to then see the offender as being solely to blame. This is perhaps why there was not as clear a denunciation of the offenders as I had originally anticipated.

On the other hand, family background did provide the backdrop to the experience that I had assumed it would, though not necessarily in the manner indicated by the literature. Intrafamilial abuse was not so much the issue as was a general discontent with family relationships, particularly as it concerned the father.

No one recalled having a close relationship with his father and most indicated that the relationship was distant and strained. It is difficult to say how significant this may have been as a contributing factor since the emphasis was not on assigning causal relationships. That each individual mentioned his relationship with his father in the course of discussion suggests though that it was important on a personal level. In general it was found that the overall family relationships, for example, the chaos and disintegration that characterized Donald's family, the marital strain that characterized Ernie's family and the restrained relationships that characterized Lloyd's family, created an environment that did not feel supportive or encouraging for the participants.

The obvious exception to this was Lionel. His situation could be interpreted as intrafamilial abuse since it involved an extended family member, and seemed to involve the collusion of other family members in its continuation.

Participant availability was another concern in the original planning of this study, and as noted in Chapter Three, my expectation had been that because the subject matter was difficult and personal, men would not volunteer with alacrity. Given that I ended up with eight volunteers, three more than I actually required, it could be said that my assumption on this point was not borne out. It did, however, take a few months to secure five men whom I thought would meet the stated criteria. If the time line for completion of the study were a factor, the selection process would have been under more stress and it would have then become more apparent whether or not availability of participants was a significant concern. All of this aside, it was clear that even though the participants had some reservations about their role, and about the subject matter, they were nonetheless concerned that I understand what they had experienced.

As might be expected, both sexuality and current relationships were issues. For the two men who had clearly identified themselves as being homosexual, sexuality was perhaps more of an issue than for the others; for all but one (Ernie) the ability to be in or to maintain a relationship was an ongoing concern. Everyone stated that in one way or another their experience had influenced their subsequent intimate and platonic relationships and had caused them as well to be more aware of themselves around children.

This Study in Relation to Previous Research

As the literature review of Chapter Two indicates, there is little direct similarity between this study and previous research efforts. The most obvious difference has been a methodological one, with the majority of studies dealing

specifically with male sexual abuse attempting to quantify the phenomenon and to classify it in terms of prevalence rates, long term effects, or treatment issues. Others have focussed on specific population groups or on retroactive comparisons of male and female clinical cases. The present study has adopted a phenomenological perspective that has attempted to achieve a holistic view of the phenomenon from the participant's understanding and experience of it. There are, however, some useful, albeit at this stage highly speculative, comparisons or analogies which can be made between this and other studies.

Rogers and Terry (1984), in their clinical work with male child victims, have noted that boys tend to exhibit three common reactions to victimization: confusion over sexual identity, inappropriate attempts to reassert masculinity (by for instance, picking fights with stronger, older boys), and recapitulation of the victimizing experience (playing out the original abuse but in the role of aggressor rather than victim) (p. 95). Unfortunately, they included in their data one time acts of sexual assault, which are dissimilar from those of sexual abuse, and as such their findings have limited applicability to the current study. In addition they were reporting on children seen at the time of intervention and so do not afford a perspective comparable to that of the adult males who participated in the present study. The responses given by the men indicated that only one of the three reactions--sexual identity--was clearly and definitely a concern. This does not suggest that the other two responses identified by Rogers and Terry aren't or weren't issues; simply that they were not addressed by any of the participants in this study. Given the growing concern with and awareness of reactive abuse (i.e., recapitulation), a more in-depth exploration of these three issues alone may tell us something about the source of offending behaviour.

A number of researchers have noted that boys on the whole do not report their own victimization or upon reporting are extremely reluctant to talk about it (e.g., Fritz, Stoll & Wagner, 1981; Nasjleti, 1980; Reinhart, 1987; Nasjleti, 1980; The Canadian Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children, 1984). This was confirmed in the present study as only one participant recalled trying to tell someone. Regrettably he was made to feel that he was either lying or was to blame for what had happened. When asked why they had not told, the rest of the participants revealed that they didn't know that that was possible, they had no one they could rely on or trust to respond appropriately, or they weren't sure that they hadn't caused the problem in the first place.

Neilsen (1983) and Nasjleti (1980) have suggested, however, that boys don't disclose their abuse for two reasons: because it would mean admitting to their own helplessness which is inconsistent with the masculine image, and because it would leave them open to suggestions of homosexuality. In the present study helplessness or powerlessness did come up, but in the context of the abuse and not necessarily in terms of being afraid to admit to their own vulnerability. Lack of information, especially in the area of sexuality, sex, and sexual abuse, as well as the absence of an adult in the role of sympathetic listener or confidant, exacerbated the perception of helplessness within the abuse situation.

The fear of being labelled gay, or of their own homosexuality was articulated by at least two participants and wondered about by the others. It is quite likely that this played a role in the silence that surrounded the experience.

Many of the other research efforts involving male victims, such as those by Kaufman et al. (1980); Pierce and Pierce (1985); Reinhart (1987); deYoung (1982);

Freeman-Longo (1986); and Ellerstein and Canavan (1980), have tended to either provide a statistical analysis of data related to age at the time of victimization, race, family constellation, socio-economic background and type of physical trauma suffered, or have focussed on the most pathological case examples. These do not bear much resemblance to the study at hand, and have done little to illuminate the experience of sexual abuse in its entirety. Because of this they are not commented upon here. Finkelhor (1979, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1986) on the other hand, having both researched the issues surrounding sexual abuse and proposed models for analyzing the phenomenon and its impact, is seen to have developed a broader scope. His findings are the primary focus in the following comments.

In his 1981 study on the sexual abuse of boys, Finkelhor found among other things, that boys tend to be victimized most often between the ages of ten and thirteen. With but one exception this held true for the current study. It was thought that age was a factor primarily because on the whole boys tend to be abused by nonfamily members which would indicate a certain amount of independence and readiness to move beyond the family for one's social contacts. This is not meant to imply though that boys are potential targets for sexual abuse as soon as they reach the ages of nine or ten, or begin to partake in activities outside the home. There are certain other conditions which must first be met.

In 1984 Finkelhor identified four general pre-conditions (1) which he said had to exist in order for sexual abuse to occur. Of particular interest and relevance to the current study are the sub-factors associated with two of the four preconditions. Citing social/cultural and individual factors such as "lack of

supervision of the child," "a child emotionally insecure," "a child who lacks knowledge about sexual abuse," "coercion," "social powerlessness of the child," "situation of unusual trust between child and offender," and "unavailability of sex education for children" (p. 57); Finkelhor suggests that there are numerous ways in which children can be rendered vulnerable to assault.

The participants in the present study all made mention of situations which would indicate that to varying degrees they experienced the factors mentioned by Finkelhor. This would seem to suggest that for the participants it was not simply a matter of becoming more independent in the world, but of a combination of social, familial, and individual factors which ultimately made them readily identifiable and thus easily assaulted.

It is apparent though that Finkelhor has used as his reference point the typical scenario involving female victim and male offender. As such many of the factors listed in his model are either not relevant to the phenomenon as it pertains to males, or have yet to be determined.

Finkelhor (1981) also concluded that victimized boys tend to come from impoverished, single-parent families. It was observed though that four of the participants in this study did not come from broken homes and only two indicated homes wherein financial difficulties existed. However, in their descriptions of the familial relationships, most participants decried the poor communication and lack of closeness between themselves and their fathers'. Hence, the impoverishment suffered, if it was not economic per se, was at the very least, intrafamilial.

Finkelhor and Browne (1985) have tried as well to provide a conceptualization of the impact of sexual abuse. To this end they have proposed a

model based on four generalized trauma causing factors (2) which they say can be used to explain victim reactions. Associated with each dynamic is a particular group of psychological impact factors and behavioural manifestations. What is appealing about this model is that it is neither gender specific nor single issue dominated. Instead it attempts to encourage a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by recognizing its complexity.

Many, though not all, of the participants recollections and responses fit within one of the four general dynamics identified in Finkelhor and Browne's (1985) model. It was apparent, for example, that the participant's felt blamed, and pressured into secrecy. Some also spoke of a sense of guilt and differentness from others. However, the extent to which one led to the other, or even to suicide or isolating types of behaviours, is unclear since the focus was not on the determination of causal relationships. Consequently, it is not known whether the participants exhibited each sequential aspect of the generalized dynamics noted by Finkelhor and Browne, only that they did indicate congruence on many of the items.

While Finkelhor and Browne have made apparent for the first time the association between various acts of sexual abuse and the feelings and behaviours which often seem to follow, it remains unclear whether their model is adaptable to the male experience. The reason for this is that the model they've proposed is based largely on the existing research which, as has been previously mentioned, is mostly representative of the female experience. The model itself is also perhaps best used as a clinical assessment tool. To determine its relevance and completeness with respect to males, however, would require research designed specifically with that purpose in mind.

Research has shown that children who are sexually abused typically find some way of reconciling their private experience with the exigencies of their larger, more public world. Summit (1983) calls this the child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome and notes that much less is known about boys than girls with respect to their various accommodation mechanisms. The discrepancy in awareness he suggests, is due to the almost universal rejection of boys as victims and the general fear of homosexuality.

In the current study it was found that the participants employed a variety of coping strategies. They denied the experience, disassociated from it, withdrew, compartmentalized, and even began to accommodate it. What is noteworthy about their statements is that they were spontaneous: no deliberate attempt had been made to elicit that aspect of the experience and it was only in reviewing the transcripts that the pattern of coping became apparent.

Summit's (1983) theory is that the syndrome is made up of five categories (3), two of which are preconditions and three of which are "sequential contingencies" to the sexual abuse. The present study seems to support some elements of his theory. Secrecy, for example, was found to be a common theme or condition of the abuse. Whether implicitly or explicitly, the participants knew that they were not to tell anyone of what was going on. As Donald said, there was a lot of power in maintaining that secret.

Helplessness, in the context that Summit provides means that the victim, for social, emotional, or physical, reasons is illequipped to prevent or ward off the abuse. He goes on to say that the question of free will or submission should thus never become an issue and that compliance is more an act of survival than an act of informed decision-making.

In the context of this study, these issues did plague the participants, and as has been suggested elsewhere, were central to their struggle to understand the experience. Personal judgments were hard to overcome though and at least two of the participants (Lloyd, Richard) found fault in themselves for not having been able to halt the abuse.

Summit suggests that the accommodation reaction is actually a way of regaining one's sense of power and control and of diminishing the feeling of vulnerability. The findings of the current study are congruent with this notion. Donald, for example, managed to gain control by recreating a more pleasant reality for himself in his role as "class prankster." Lionel on the other hand recalled that he worked hard at being the "good boy" (high achiever) in all other aspects of his life and never let the abuse relationship intrude on those successes.

Only one participant disclosed his abuse and so neither of the latter two categories in Summit's model had application to the present study. Because disclosure did not occur at the time of abuse, retraction was not a factor. By the time the participants began to speak of their experiences they were adults and so not as likely to recant. Besides, for the most part the abuse experiences were not familial, which meant that loyalties were not as conflicted. Lloyd's situation was the one exception to this and in his case family loyalty and protection of the secret did become paramount. What this suggests then is that the model needs some adjustment to match situations wherein the abuse is external to the family.

Implications for Future Research

It became apparent during the completion of this study that very little information relating solely to male child sexual abuse is available. One reason for this is that boys have only just recently emerged as victims. As such it has taken researchers some time to design studies relevant to the phenomenon. This is unfortunate on two accounts: treatment programs appropriate for boy victims have been slow in coming, and as Groth has stated (at a public forum) it is by knowing more about the victims that we will eventually know how to work with offender behaviour. Since adult males are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of sex offences, finding a way of confronting the problem in childhood could be efficacious.

Based both on my findings and my experiences in conducting this study, I would suggest the following research directions:

1. Additional research of a phenomenological design. It is not enough to describe sexual abuse in terms of prevalence rates, demographics, or similar objectified criteria since these in no way contribute to a broader understanding of what the experience means. What is required is further exploration of the experience such that the latter is revealed. Phenomenology is particularly relevant in this regard because of the emphasis on the lived experience and the honoring of that experience without disabusing it from the environmental context. Furthermore as an investigative tool phenomenology offers a mechanism for getting at the nuances of the phenomenon (i.e., sexual abuse), for discovering its unique complexities, and for counteracting its inhibiting factors such as shame and secrecy. This style of research, especially at the early stages of discovery, can be

immensely useful in creating a context for understanding the experience, for providing direction as to future research, and for providing practicing counsellors with helpful insights as to some features of the experience.

2. Research involving the meaning construction of male victims. There is growing interest in understanding how it is that victims respond to traumatic events. Brooks (1987), Jehu et al. (1986), and Silver et al. (1983), have focussed on female incest or sexual abuse victims and looked at how it is that they make sense of their experiences. The emphasis has been on the distorted belief systems and connected behavioural patterns. Knowing more about how it is that male victims make sense of their experience, and the kind of belief systems they build up around it, may provide clues as to how best to work with both victims and offenders.

3. Research which would apply Finkelhor's model of traumagenic dynamics or Summit's model of the child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome. Both these models contain elements which seem applicable to male child sexual abuse. However, they may not be complete. As Summit (1983) has noted, his model refers to and is largely based on the female experience (p. 180). Nevertheless it is important to know whether the models in their entirety are useful as theoretical frameworks, or whether they are better employed as beginning points for the development of models more particular to the phenomenon as it affects males.

4. A comparison of victims of familial sexual abuse with those who experienced sexual abuse external to the family. In the current study one member indicated on-going abuse by an extended family member. The rest experienced abuse through someone outside of the family. There were some obvious

discrepancies in the two scenarios, such as a lessor emphasis on the engagement or entrapment phase, a greater degree of family complicity in protecting the secret, and a greater confusion of loyalties. There may be numerous others as well which would help differentiate the two experiences.

Implications for Counselling

A common criticism of phenomenology is that the results are not generalizable. In as much as the results are specific to the research participants this may be accurate. However, as Hycner (1985) has pointed out, this does not mean that the findings aren't "phenomenologically informative about human beings in general" (p. 295). In other words, to the extent that the findings shed light on the phenomenon the study will tell us something about the human condition overall.

In the current study the findings tell us something about the male experience of childhood sexual abuse. While there is obviously more to be learned and more variations of the experience to be explored, the data as they are presented here does give some indication of what the experience might be like in similar circumstances. Counsellors working with adult nonoffending male victims may, therefore, wish to keep the following in mind.

As the current study shows, sexual abuse cannot be treated as a singular issue. Rather it is a highly complex phenomenon which evokes a wide array of responses. These may include issues of personal guilt, secrecy, shame, family complicity, anger, and conflicted and confused memories over the relationship with the offender. This is by no means a complete list though and ought not to be viewed as such.

As was indicated in the current study the social and familial environment at the time of the abuse provides a context that may be extremely useful in understanding its aetiology. What also needs to be looked at is the kind of reward system used by the offender to entice the victim or the kind of family system in place which may have supported the abuse. Both are likely to have helped define the structure of the experience. Information was apparently lacking for all of the individuals in this study, such that no one felt that he knew until much later how to define the abuse or even what to call it. Furthermore the experience itself was reported to have distorted current perceptions of sexual intimacy, friendship, and genuine versus exploitive behaviours. This would seem to suggest then the need for an educational component to the counselling process.

Chapter Five: Notes

1. Finkelhor's four preconditions are (pp. 56-57):

- Precondition I: Factors Related to Motivation to Sexually
 Abuse
- Precondition II: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming Internal
 Inhibitors
- Precondition III: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming External
 Inhibitors
- Precondition IV: Factors Predisposing to Overcoming Child's
 Resistance

2. Finkelhor and Browne's four traumagenic dynamics are listed as traumatic sexualization, betrayal, stigmatization, and powerlessness. These are identified as the core of the psychological injury inflicted by the abuse (p. 530).

3. Summit has identified secrecy, helplessness, entrapment and accommodation, delayed, conflicted and unconvincing disclosure, and retraction as the five categories in the accommodation syndrome model.

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APPENDIX A
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To be used as a guideline for interviewing the participants.

1. Describe as best you can, growing up in your family: i.e. what was it like for you, how would you describe your family members, their relationships with each other, and with you.
2. Describe the sequence of events leading up to and surrounding the first incident of sexual abuse.
3. How old were you when it began?
4. Were you aware of any special events immediately preceding the abuse? Any changes in you, your family, your circumstances, etc.?
5. Please describe the overall sexual abuse experience . Some considerations might be who the offender was, whether force was used, whether anyone else knew what was happening, how you felt about it, etc.
6. Did you experience and physical or emotional pleasure at the time? What other thoughts and feelings were you aware of?
7. Describe anything you can remember in terms of your social, emotional, physical, or personal reactions to the abuse after it ended.
8. How did you feel towards other males? How did you feel towards females? Any change in either of these over time?

9. How old were you when the abuse stopped? How did it end? Did you tell anyone at the time?
10. What is your understanding of having been sexually abused? What meaning does the experience hold for you?
11. Describe your feelings now about the offender.
12. Describe your feelings now about yourself.
13. Is there anything about where you are currently in terms of social, personal or family relationships which you think has been influenced in some way by your experience? Do you find yourself thinking about, or reflecting on, your past experience in terms of your life today?
14. Is there anything more you'd like to add about your experience of sexual abuse?
15. Any thoughts for counsellors working with men who have had similar experiences?

APPENDIX B

OPEN LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Dear Friend:

I am a candidate for a masters Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria, and have been working at the Victoria Child Sexual Abuse Centre with victims of sexual abuse since January 1985. As partial completion of my degree, I am undertaking a study which is in support of adult men (18 years or older) who have experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence. I am writing this letter to ask for your assistance, because I need volunteers who will discuss with me their experiences. I believe that it is important to learn first hand from males about their sexual abuse experience so that we can better understand what happens for those individuals and hopefully in the long run be able to offer them and others more adequate service in terms of counselling. For obvious reasons (especially legal), I cannot accept anyone who has actively and knowingly been a sexual offender as well.

I understand that this request may be extremely difficult for you. Sexual abuse is not an easy topic for anyone to talk about and it may be that you've never discussed your experience with anyone before. In the past men seem to have found this particularly hard to do. I hope that this study will help break the silence that currently surrounds the issue, and in this your assistance will be invaluable.

What I need from you is some time. If you agree to volunteer we will arrange an interview time and place that is convenient for you. I will meet with you privately and I will ask you questions to do with the abuse and your feelings. You will also be given an opportunity to speak freely and to focus on those aspects of the experience which are most important for you. We will probably need two ninety minute interviews altogether.

Information which may personally identify you will be kept confidential and anonymous. Your name will never be used or revealed beyond our interviews. The material you provide me will become part of my written thesis, which I will present to my university supervisors. You will receive a copy of the final product if you so desire.

If you want more information or if you wish to volunteer, I can be reached during the day at 721-8357. Messages can also be left at the Victoria Child Sexual Abuse Centre, 381-4551. Your time and contribution will be appreciated.

Thank you.

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

I, _____ consent to being a participant in this study, which is about men who have experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence.

I am aware that I will be asked certain questions about my own experience and the meaning it had for me, and that that will take place during audio-taped, in-depth interviews with the researcher.

I understand that my involvement in this study will be kept in the strictest confidence. Furthermore, the resulting transcript will not include personally revealing information such as my name, my employers name, my address, etc.

I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without any unfavourable consequences.

I understand that I will receive the transcripts at the end of the interviews and that I will be given an opportunity to comment on them in terms of accuracy and add to them any additional information which I feel may be important.

Signed _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D
RESOURCES AVAILABLE LOCALLY

If participating in this study has affected you in any way such that you want to talk it over with a counsellor or psychologist, here are some possible referral sources.

1. Citizens' Counselling Centre: 384-9943. Small fee for service charged according to ability to pay. Trained lay counsellors offer one-to-one counselling.
2. Need Crisis Line: 386-6323. A free service which offers information about local services and provides telephone crisis counselling 24 hours a day.
3. Mental Health:
 - Victoria: 387-6311
 - Saanich: 479-1602 Both centres provide for free the services of a variety of trained professionals.
4. Springridge Counselling Centre: 381-1325. Psychologists and therapists in private practice with experience working with sexual abuse victims and offenders. A fee is charged and there may be a long waiting list.

VITA

Surname: Hubberstey Given Names: Carol Marie

Place of Birth: Nanaimo, BC Date of Birth: July 23, 1954

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

<u>Malaspina College, Nanaimo</u>	<u>1973</u>	to	<u> </u>
<u>University of Victoria, Victoria</u>	<u>1974</u>	to	<u>1975</u>
<u>University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA</u>	<u>1975</u>	to	<u>1978</u>
<u>University of Victoria, Victoria</u>	<u>1984</u>	to	<u>1988</u>

Degrees Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

<u>B.A.</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>University of Massachusetts</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

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SEXUAL ABUSE IN CHILDHOOD OR ADOLESCENCE**

Author:



Carol Hubberstey

April 7, 1988

April 7, 1988