

BIOLOGICAL FATHER/DAUGHTER SEXUAL ABUSE
AND
STEP-FATHER/STEP-DAUGHTER SEXUAL ABUSE
COMPARED

By

Martin Shawn Rutledge

A Thesis

submitted to

The Faculty of Graduate Studies
In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

This research compares sexual abuse between biological fathers and their daughters and step-fathers and their step-daughters. It is based on the hypothesis that, if treated as discrete entities and compared, biological father abusers and step-father abusers would present unique and identifiable differences between the populations. An analysis of sixty-four (64) sexual abuse files compiled by a Northern Ontario Child Protection Agency over the period January 1985 to August 1989 was undertaken. Data drawn from the file analysis indicated biological fathers more frequently abused at the more serious levels, more frequently involved multiple daughters and more often began the sexual activity with a younger age population. Possible explanations of the differences found, including taboo comparisons, nurturing patterns and disclosure characteristics are discussed.

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To curiosity and to all those who foster and nurture it.

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PREAMBLE

The reported incidence of sexual abuse is and has been steadily on the rise since the mid nineteen seventies. Child Protection Agencies have been overwhelmed in many ways in responding to increased demands for investigation and service. In 1987, Family & Children's Services of the District of Thunder Bay (F.&C.S.) investigated a total of 468 referrals of sexual and physical abuse. In 1986, the number of referrals had been 220, representing an increase of 112% in one year. Throughout this increase in investigations, Agency Workers had noticed, what appeared to be a disproportionate number of sexual abuse investigations occurring in step-family situations. A quick examination of the literature (Finklehor 1979) revealed that this casual observation was based in fact. Within the agency no consideration was given to handling these blended families in any different way from biological families. However, in a common sense way, workers agreed there must be some differences between these families which may alter prediction, investigation, intervention and treatment approaches, as well as prevention strategies.

This research stemmed directly from the observations of the Child Welfare Workers in Thunder Bay Family and Children's Services.

CHAPTER I

GETTING STARTED

I INTRODUCTION:

Recently, researchers have begun to examine intra-familial sexual abuse of children speculating that the event and its impact may vary within structurally different families. In the review of the literature undertaken in this research, it is evident that many authors, have either not considered the possibility of offender differences or, have concluded there was no necessity to make a distinction between biological father and step-father sexual abuse, treating data from both as a single set of information (Herman 1981, Ellenson 1986, Gelinas 1983). Few researchers have attempted a comparative study, but those who have (Russell 1984, Phelan 1986) argue that there is sufficient evidence to consider sexual abuse by step-and biological fathers as heterogeneous events.

a) Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research, is to further study biological father and step-father abusers by comparison. It is based on the hypothesis that; if bio and step-father offenders are treated as discreet entities so that they can be compared, there will be distinguishing characteristics identified, showing them to be heterogeneous populations.

A distinction between these offenders is necessary for several reasons, not the least of which is the fact that what

research is available is finding differences. The findings of these previous studies are tentative and they have called for further study to validate the distinctions they see emerging.

Further to this Phelan (1986) argues the majority of treatment models do not differentiate family type or relationship of perpetrator to victim. "... the belief that incestuous behaviour stems from the same fundamental causes for all perpetrators has precluded search for variation in terms of relationship and/or family structure within the treatment community." (Phelan 1986 p.536). The assumption, of course, is that if differences do exist they may well indicate a need for the development of different therapeutic approaches. There are currently three dominate theoretical approaches to clinical treatment, Systems Theory, Feminist Theory and Strategic Theory. In all of these approaches victim-perpetrator relationship and family type are side issues.

Family Systems Theory is in general a theory that postulates sexual abuse is a symptom of severe family dysfunction. In this regard, marriage and sexual problems, role reversal, neurotic fears of desertion and abandonment are common components which can lead to Incest as a symptom or solution.

Alexander 1985 argues:

"Incest should not be viewed as an end in itself, but simply as a behavior symptomatic of a family that is isolated from the environment; that is avoidant of the differentiation of roles, functions, and individual members; and that uses the incest behavior as just one more means to avoid the growth and change that is inherent in

adolescents seeking outside contacts and eventually leaving home." (p. 82)

Sgori 1982, Dawson 1982, Hoorwitz 1983 and Anderson 1985 all argue the incestuous family is a closed family system experiencing social and emotional isolation often compounded by geographic remoteness. Finklehor (1984) identified farm children as being at greater risk because of both social and geographic isolation. Presumably being in close proximity to an active social network is a deterrent to abuse. Sgori (1982) believes these families are more than introverted, they may even be hostile in this attitude and behaviour to the outside world. Dawson (1982) suggests they may be families made up of individuals who have not developed adequate social skills to build satisfying relationships outside the family. Server and Janzen (1982) believe incestuous families are an unfortunate coupling of two adults who as individuals had difficulty in developing positive relationships. Similarly Taylor (1984) demonstrates these couples as neurotically enmeshed and preoccupied with their internal needs and fears. This causes them to become "ingrown" with strong external boundaries but very weak internal boundaries. This scenario is typical of an enmeshed family system with blurred internal role boundaries.

Incest becomes the family stabilizer. The marriage relation is unstable due to unmet needs; the spouse fear or feel abandonment and lack intimacy. Parental needs and responsibilities are shifted to the daughter completing an Incest triangle. There is a reduction of marital stress and

family functioning appears to improve. However this coping mechanism is at the expense of the daughter. The father is presumed to choose an endogamous extra-marital sex partner due to these boundary difficulties.

Feminist Theory about the etiology of child sexual abuse has its roots in the belief that a male dominated culture brings exploitation of both women and dependent children. The patriarchal family structure, sexual division of labour and affective nurturance of offspring all combine to socialize men and women in different ways. Feminists argue men are socialized to see women as inferior, weak and subordinate to males. Additionally, the stereotypical female tasks are also seen in this way. Since nurturing offspring is primarily a female role in the patriarchal family men do not as readily learn to distinguish affection from sexuality. In essence, when a man craves affection his realm of experience is narrowed to experiences where affection needs are met sexually (Herman 1981). This causes a greater likelihood of males sexualizing relationships with children. Finklehor (1984) argues this is why men are more interested in pornography, in that men relate to the sexual act and not to the romance combined with the sexual act.

The feminist perspective suggests where males are supreme in terms of their power position men will see women and children as property. Butler (1980) demonstrates this with several common cliches "men are kings in their castles"; "the

little woman stands loyally and firmly behind her man"; "a sexually successful man is a lady killer"; "children are the property of their parents". (p. 50). In the feminist view so long as men and women are seen as unequal, men will continue to exploit their power over women and children further conditioning females to be subservient, accommodating, dependent and passive, including female children who accept abuse with passive tolerance. Dawson (1982) suggests: "The fact that the majority of perpetrators, of both sexual abuse of children and sexual assault of adult females, are males and the victims females, gives credence to this theory." (p. 79).

The feminist perspective (Butler 1980, Herman 1981) relies almost entirely on the concept of male dominance and abusive use of power and authority. From a position of power often enforced with physical threat or action the father exploits his family and victimizes his daughter. Herman (1981) contends Incest may fulfil the offenders hostile and aggressive tendencies which he cannot act out in other mileaus. "Power and dominance rather than sexual pleasure may be the primary motivator." (p. 87) This is reinforced by the high rates of correlated physical abuse of sibs and wife abuse found in incestuous families (Taylor 1984).

Strategic theorists suggest incest is all about power arrangements in the family structure. They argue the primary characteristic feature of incest is a rearrangement of the empowered members of the family. (Wheeler 1989) Victims and

siblings may develop strong rivalrys based on inconsistent parents (deYoung 1981). Victims and offenders collaborate in some instances against the non-offending parent (Money and Werlwas 1182). Victims realize they have a greatly empowered role in the family, they hold the "key" to the family secret. deYoung (1981) suggests many of these victims become the female authority within the household at very young ages, including giving of adult advice to the mother. deYoung further suggests:

"In addition to the sense that she is in her "little mother" role, responsible for keeping the family together, the Incest victim also knows that as the keeper of the Incest secret (she has) extraordinary power which could be used to destroy the family (deYoung 1981, p. 563)."

Just as there is a rearrangement of power within the family this power is often abused. Paradoxically the victim realizes new powers, but is powerless to stop the abuse. The offender exploits his use of authority and power to control the victim in such a way that acceptance of abuse appears favourable compared to disclosure (Gruber 1981). The non-offending parent's lack of power and failure to protect the victim results in scorn. Herman (1981) suggests mothers often perceived correctly that what bound father and daughter was a shared hostility to the mother. Subsequently the daughters became alienated from their mothers. Expecting no refuge from the abuse to be provided by the mother they once again felt elevated in contrast to the mother and yet powerless to do anything but comply to the father's demands.

As an underlying premise, this author believes just as individual psychodynamics cannot solely explain sexual abuse nor can family characteristics regardless of your theoretical posture. Having an understanding of both individual psychodynamics and of incestuous family characteristics adds to the diagnostic repertoire of clinicians and researchers when applying a multi-causal analysis to the etiology of sexual abuse.

In this regard Fish and Faynik (1989) reflect:

"Our own point of view is the "individual" variables and "systems" variables are, in practice, inseparable.

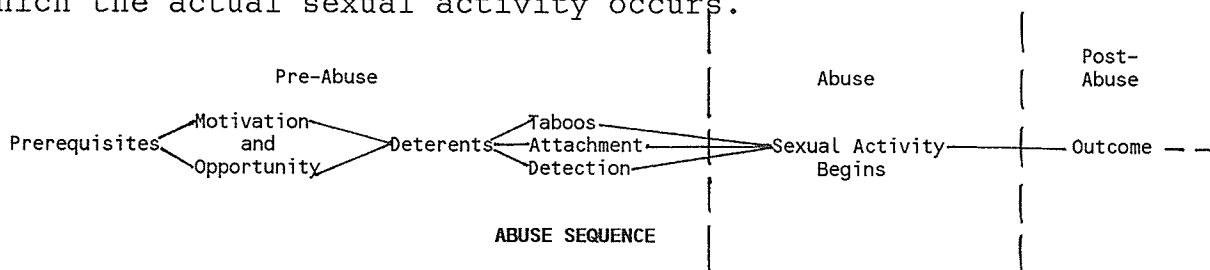
... We tend to agree with those who say that sexual abuse is what it is -- sexual and abusive -- and not something else, on both intellectual and practical grounds. Research confirms that the actual event of sexual exploitation of the child is routinely problematic for the victim (Herman, 1981; Herman and Hirschman, 1977; Meiselman, 1978; Miller et al., 1978). However, particular characteristics of family organization, while often associated with a variety of problems, have not been shown to be traumatic per se. In families where illicit sexual behaviour has been concealed and denied, in a culture with ambivalent and confusing attitudes about sexuality and its discussion, most attempts to reframe sexual abuse become subsumed by already powerful processes of mystification. Also, the legal and child protection systems will usually view illegal sexual behavior as the major (though not exclusive) reason for treatment, and its prevention as the highest priority."

Following from this, the question this research will address is; does the abuse event and its implications for post abuse trauma vary in structurally different families? If so,

what are the implications for practice, particularly as it relates to child protection.

b) Structure

Conceptually, we can picture the abusive incident as being sequential. Within this conceptual framework there are three main phases of the abuse sequence, pre-abuse, abuse and post abuse. Within the pre-abuse phase there are two key elements. First, there are pre-cursors or prerequisites; of these prerequisites, there appear to be two predominant "sub-elements", perpetrator motivation and opportunity. The second key element of the pre-abuse phase is that of overcoming deterrents and inhibitions. Within this key element there appear to be three sub-elements: current sexual taboos, likelihood of detection and victim-perpetrator attachment. The second element in the abuse sequence is the abuse phase, in which the actual sexual activity occurs.



The sequence continues on to outcome, that being the net result of the abuse experience for all involved. In this regard, resolution would not only be cessation of the abuse, but also, the victim's healthy psychological resolution of the abuse. All that occurs during this time between cessation and resolution, would be the post abuse phase of the abuse sequence.

Within the confines of this study only the characteristics of the pre-abuse phase will be examined. As stated, the purpose of this study is a comparison of bio and step-father abuse in order to establish whether or not differences exist between these offender groups.

The structure of this study will follow the conceptual framework outlined above. An examination of pre-requisites, deterrents/inhibitions, and a commentary on the abuse phase will be undertaken, with the focus of this research being to expose probable differences between bio-fathers and step-fathers, that may account for increased incidence and/or disclosure of step-father abuse. The literature review will focus the research component and direct the structure of the data collection instrument. This instrument will then be used in a file survey of child abuse files in a Family Service Agency. An analysis of these abuse investigation files will be conducted. The results will compare bio- and step-fathers and indicate areas for further research.

II DEFINITIONS:

a) Step-Fathers and Biological Fathers

i. **Step-fathers** - are defined in this study as father figures through lawful marriage, common-law marriage and live-in paramour relationships where they assume the parental role of father, but are not the biological parent of the children in question. Additionally, "step-father" will encompass all father

figures including the mother's paramour, so long as the paramour is live-in.

ii. **Biological fathers** - are defined in this study as the biological parent, who through this consanguineous or blood tie assume the parental role of father.

b) **Incest**

As mentioned in the introduction, many researchers have foregone the task of separating offender types, tending to categorize step and bio-fathers as "father figures". The defence of this non-distinction is, as Gelinas (1983) argues, "Incest can be defined by two criteria: sexual contact and a pre-existing relationship between adult and child" (p. 313). Based on her review of the literature on the impact of incest and step-parent sexual abuse, she found "Sexual abuse by surrogate fathers appears indistinguishable in nets, or effects upon the victim from that of biological fathers. It is the relationship, not the biology that is betrayed." Other research is demonstrating that post-abuse trauma is associated with many factors including level of abuse, existence of supportive family and particularly the relationship of the offender to the victim (Conte & Schuerman 1987). Researchers and practitioners alike are striving to understand which factors are more likely related to greater trauma in abuse victims. In this regard, when research includes step-fathers in the same offender category as bio-fathers, many potentially beneficial discoveries may be lost. The fact that many researchers suggest that there is a

similar net effect on the victim, be they victims of biological or step-parent sexual abuse, does not negate the fact that somehow one must account for the impact of the Incest Taboo and blood ties. Researchers can neither assume that their effect does not exist or that it exists simply because of cohabitation as in the case of step-parent or paramour sexual abuse.

Since the focus of this research is a comparison between biological father sexual abuse and step or paramour (father figure) sexual abuse, the distinction in definition is necessary. Therefore, Incest will be used literally and will refer specifically to sexual activity between biologically related individuals, denoting a breach of the Incest Taboo.

c) Sexual Abuse and Sexual Activity

i) Sexual Abuse

Understanding that there is a wide range of sexual activity, which when involving a child, is felt to be abusive helps in formulating and understanding any definitions of sexual abuse. Sgori (1982) suggests "Sexual activity between an adult and a child may range from exhibitionism to intercourse" (p. 10). Although the range of activity is important and undoubtedly plays a major role with regard to impact, what is underlying is a sexual exploitation of a child by an adult.

Dawson defines sexual abuse:

"The involvement of children, by adults in sexual behaviour or activities to stimulate a child sexually or to use a child for the sexual stimulation either of the perpetrator or any other person." (Dawson 1982 p. 53).

The above definition is all inclusive of acts against children by adults, whether or not force or coercion was used. It also places culpability with the offender, demonstrating the exploitative nature of adult-child sexual abuse. For the purposes of this study, sexual abuse will be defined as Dawson (1982) has defined it.

ii) Sexual Activity

Sgori (1982) defines the "Mechanics" of sexual abuse as being fourteen sexual acts which she describes as being progressive in nature. Once again, these acts are on a continuum beginning with nudity and exhibitionism through kissing, masturbation, fellatio and finally intercourse. Summitt and Kryso (1978) identify a similar spectrum of progressive sexuality. They offer ten categories ranging from "Incidental sexual contact" through to sexual activity which becomes more extreme. As the sexual activity continuum of Summitt and Kryso (1978) escalates so does the related violence and/or the more disturbed the perpetrator. The continuum ends with "Perverse Incest", the most bizarre and destructive sexual activity; acts ranging from mutilation through to death have been described in the literature (Money & Werlwas 1982, C.O.S.O.C.Y. 1984). Faller offers a four category repertoire ranging from "sexual contact and fondling" through "oral genital intercourse" and fourthly any other intrusion "into the body." Attempting to delineate sexual activity is beneficial from the point of diagnosis and assessment. Understanding that there is

a range of sexual abuse from less serious to very serious is particularly important for research which is comparing offender populations. This research will explore severity as a variable, to determine if one offender category abuses at a more serious level than the other. "Sexual activity" for the purpose of this research will refer to: any sexualized contact between an adult and a child. Severity will be dealt with more fully later on.

CHAPTER II

PREREQUISITES TO ABUSE

I INTRODUCTION

Webster defines prerequisite as a provision required beforehand as a necessary condition. In the abuse sequence, as illustrated above, two prerequisites appear dominant; (a) motivation and (b) opportunity, both will be elaborated upon below.

II MOTIVATION

In order for abuse to occur motivation must exist, at least in the offender. The concept of motivation can create an impression of premeditation and of conscious thought. This is not necessarily true, Hindsey & Campbell define motivation as:

"The force or energy that propels an organism to seek a goal or to satisfy a need ... (1970 pg. 482)

They further define unconscious motivation as:

an aim or goal that is not recognized consciously by the subject ... even though there is no longer any conscious awareness of these events, it does not mean that they cease to affect the individual: they nonetheless produce excitation which seeks for discharge ..." (1970 p.482)

In an editorial review of modern psychological theory Calvin Hall & Gardner Lindzey (1978) reviewed the work of the prominent American psychologist Henry A. Murray, they concluded:

Among academic psychologists Murray was one of the first to accept the insidious and pervasive role of unconscious determinants

of behavior. As we have observed, in his first major theoretical statement he made clear that not all regnant processes have conscious correlates and, naturally enough, those that do not, determine behavior without the individual's awareness. Not only is the individual unaware of certain tendencies that influence behavior but, more important, some of these tendencies are actively defended against or warded off from consciousness. (1978, p.231)

Undoubtedly many abuse perpetrators consciously plan and consummate their abuses. It appears likely that many abusers are also driven by an unconscious motivation, equally as compelling and with ultimately the same consequences. We are a long way from understanding why an adult abuses a child. It is widely accepted amongst sexual abuse researchers that sexual abuse is the product of many combined factors, and that attempting to examine only a single factor as the cause is a fool's errand. However, in an attempt to understand perpetrator motivation, it is important to review what is known about father and father figure abusers who have abused their children. Specific to this research, we must then compare the offender populations looking for characteristic differences between bio and step-fathers, which may help in understanding motivation.

Within the available bio-father and step-father research, nothing was found that compared specific contributing individual factors. This researcher found no indication in the literature, of heightened substance abuse, physical violence, tyrannical personality, economic problems, marital discord or other factors believed to contribute to increased levels of

sexual abuse, in either bio-fathers or step-fathers. Differences may exist based on family structure; however, no empirical evidence was found to support or discount differences between these offender types. Distinctions between these offender categories are necessary to establish whether differences exist relative to perpetrator motivation. Used as a baseline for comparison, it is important to briefly outline what research has discovered about father and father figure offenders. In the majority of the available research, no distinction was made between step and bio-offenders. Therefore, what follows is presented as a benchmark against which offenders in this study will be compared to determine if differences exist between the two offender groups.

Through this author's literature review, it appears perpetrator motivations can be categorized under four major headings: 1) Pedophilia, 2) Control, 3) Courtship, and 4) Individual Pathology.

a) Pedophilia

Hindsey and Campbell (1970) define pedophilia as an "[adult] sexual passion for children". This is one individual factor which the research has postulated as a possible difference between bio and step-fathers. Russell (1984) suggests:

"There were several cases in our survey where woman who had been sexually abused by a step-father, believed that these men had married their mothers especially in order to have access to the daughters. This appears to be a definite strategy employed by some

pedophiles." (p. 21)

Groth (1978) suggests, sexually abusive fathers are either 1) Fixated or 2) Regressed.

- 1) Fixated is defined as "a temporary or permanent arrestment of psychosocial maturation A fixated child offender is a person who has from adolescence been sexually attracted primarily or exclusively to significantly younger people....." (Groth 1978 pg.8)

Fixated Fathers are typified by:

- a) Compulsive longstanding attraction to children sexually, usually beginning in adolescence;
- b) Poor adult social and sexual relationships;
- c) Sex with a child is related to an interpersonal problem rather than intrapersonal.

- 2) Regressed is defined as "a temporary or permanent appearance of primitive behaviour after more mature forms of expression have been maintained..... A regressed child offender is a person who originally preferred adult partners for sexual gratification. However, when these adult relationships became conflictual in some important respect, the adult became replaced by the child as the focus of this person's sexual interests and desires."

(Groth 1978 pg.9)

Regressed Fathers are typified by:

- a) Primary sexual orientation to adults;
- b) Sex with a child is usually a mid life reaction to external/internal stress such as unsatisfactory marital relations;
- c) The child victim is usually "parentified" as a pseudo adult substituting in sexual and

other adult roles.

Some authors are examining Groth's typology's as essentially pedophilia vs classic intra-familial sexual abuse. Conte (1984) argues professionals are too quick to see all intra-familial sexual abuse as other than pedophilia. Offenders may well be disguised pedophiliacs, who abuse within their own families out of a sense of security. There is some dissent amongst the literature as to what portion of the total intra-familial sexual abuse cases each year are pedophilic. Finklehor (1984) in his literature review found studies (Abel 1981) indicating Incest offenders were aroused by young children, similar to a pedophile population. Other studies (Quinsey 1975) did not find this. The disagreement however, is not whether some incest is motivated by pedophilia but rather what percentage is. Further, relative to this study, whether bio or step-fathers, through the characteristics of the abuse, are more likely to demonstrate pedophile tendencies.

b) Control

i) Power and Sexual Abuse

Bateson's Cybernetic Epistemology

"We do not live in the sort of universe in which simple lineal control is possible. Life is not like that."

Gregory Bateson

And so the debate begins, there are at least three major views relative to the function or existence of power in

families in which sexual abuse occurs. Primarily the debate began amongst systems theorist/practioners and more recently feminst theorist/practitioners have entered the debate. Family Systems Theory incorporates what is often referred to as the strategic approach. In general terms the split within the system view vis a vis power and abuse can be drawn between Batesonian systems theorists and the more pragmatic strategic theorists; hence the three points of view relative to power and abuse. Each point of view is noteworthy and deserves elaboration.

The systems purests believe that whether we recognize it or not our relationships with our environment and all in it are primarily circular. When problems in a system occur, systems theorist view the problem with an emphasis on circular causality. System theorists view power as representative of lineal thinking and have, therefore, disqualified it as valid clinical concept (Bateson 1972; Dell 1989).

Conversely those of the strategic view believe that power is central to all human relations. When problems arise in a family, the strategic view would see power as the centre of the pathology and the symptoms as an expression of the power struggle. The strategic view sees human nature as naturally hierarchial with power, dominance and submission central to the human life. The strategic view sees power as a dynamic force, not necessarily stationary or vested in any one individual; power is shifted, conceded or traded through complex exchanges

between individuals and systems. This necessary exchange is the heart of power as a functional clinical concept. Accepting the premise that interdependence is a necessary state for humans, provides us with the foundation of power in human relationships. These dynamics of interdependence define power in relationships; simply, you need what I have (your dependence on me) represents my power over you, conversely, I need what you have (my dependence on you) represents your power over me. Strategic theorists see the jockeying for power as the root of pathology (Haley 1976, Dell 1989).

In a very similar way Feminist theorists recognize power as a functional clinical concept. Their departure from the strategic view is relative to the dynamic nature of power. Feminists would argue that power is vested in the traditional male hierarchy. Feminist theorists central criticism of systems theory is its failure to recognize power differences in patriarchal societies. Feminists see no mutual causality in situations where they see male dominance as the central problem, eg: sexual and physical child or spousal abuse. In this regard feminists are very lineal (Herman 1981 Phelan 1986).

The next obvious question is, how does any of this matter in the real world? This question is not intended to be flippant. The application of these theories are what drive clinical interventions, in this regard they all have limitations. Clearly they are all powerful conceptual tools, however, power and control are part of the human experience.

People feel power and feel powerless and people are controlled or controlling. To disqualify power negates these valid experiences, to see it as the sole corrupter limits individual responsibility and to see it vested only by gender eliminates any examination of mutual culpability.

In the "real world", power and control are recognized, particularly in our legislation as it relates to child sexual abuse. In any charge of a sexual assault the primary filter for laying the charge is consent. Sexual activity without consent is always a crime. Sexual activity with consent can also be a crime and consent cannot be used as a defence by the perpetrator. For the purposes of laying a charge the following benchmarks are used:

- . Children under 12 are never considered able to consent to sexual activity.
- . Children 12 or more, but under 14, are deemed unable to consent to sexual acts except under specific circumstances involving sexual activity with their peers.
- . Young persons 14 or more but under 18 are protected from sexual exploitation and their consent is not valid if the person touching them for a sexual purpose is in a position of trust or authority over them or if they are in a relationship of dependency with that person.
(Wells 1990)

It is clear from these benchmarks that abuse is seen in lineal terms, even in situations where mutual culpability is recognized it is disqualified by a relationship of authority or

dependency. The perpetrator who is in the power position is held accountable for any improprieties arising out of their exploitation of a dependent person.

On a practical level, power and unequal distribution of power are recognized realities. Our society legislates and regulates checks and balances which are intended to prevent misuses of power. This does not prevent it from being a daily reality for many people. Clearly, research is present which shows the need for power and control as a primary motivator for a father to abuse within his family.

In Herman's 1981 study she found many families where the most significant distinguishing characteristic of the incestuous father, was a tendency to dominate and regulate family members lives. Justice & Justice (1979) describe this father as a "tyrant" accordingly, fathers in this category are rigid and controlling, tolerating no opposition to their control and decision-making. Additionally, often these fathers use force and threats to maintain compliance. They do not nurture rather they control; a full fifty percent of Herman's 1981 study reported physical violence against most or all members of the household, perpetrated by the father. In the 1987 study of the Ontario Child Abuse Register, sexual abuse combined with physical abuse was the single greatest combined form of abuse. Pierce & Pierce (1985) in their attempt to understand why victims do not disclose sexual abuse, found twenty-eight percent reporting physical abuse, and an additional thirty-two percent

reporting threats of physical assault. Therefore, fully sixty percent lived in fear of not only sexual abuse, but additionally of physical abuse. In Hermans' 1981 study she found; "Half of the informants reported that their fathers were habitually violent" and additionally Herman's composite describes the father as "out of control" in the home, but seldom exceeding the limits of socially condoned violence outside the home.

There are exceptions to the rule, Server & Janzen (1982) in their study of forty-eight families report an offender history of previous criminal convictions in thirty-three percent of the families they studied. This population was by the author's description "multi-problem" with "exacerbating psychosocial problems". Additionally, a large number (thirty-eight of forty-eight) of these families chose divorce rather than treatment. "In some cases the family is so disorganized and chaotic that the incest seems to be but one part of a global pathology in a family already well known to legal authorities for other social and criminal violations." (Server & Janzen 1982 p. 288).

Generally, the belief is that when a father or step-father sexually abuses one of his own children, he is giving sexual expression to non-sexual needs. Groth (1982) suggests these fathers would be typically regressed and are not motivated primarily by sexual drive, but by non-sexual needs. Justice (1979) and Sgori (1982) agree, adding feelings of hostility toward the spouse and an unfulfilled need for affection and

intimacy are primary motivations. Both Groth (1982) and Sgori (1982) add, these offenders choose endogamous relationships rather than adultery because the extra-marital affair would not meet the need for total control and omnipotence these men need to feel. Daughters are selected because they are accessible, compliant (usually) and less demanding.

Definite maladaptive and dysfunctional uses of power and control begin to emerge in these families. From a position of power often enforced with physical threat or action, the father exploits his family and victimizes his daughter. Whether the bio-father or the step-father is more likely to use control dysfunctionally remains debateable. Phelan (1986) has made the speculation that sexual abuse may be a rapid means of gaining control for some step-fathers. The step-father may feel he has less control over the child; "the sexual arena may be one area in which step-fathers feel they can overtly take control" (Phelan 1986 p. 538). This level of control can be gained quite quickly.

c) Courtship

There are researchers who suggest that some abuses may well be a sexual consummation of a perceived courtship. Of the demographic data available regarding fathers and father figures, one striking consistency appears to be age. The majority of offenders are between thirty and forty-five with higher rates of incidence among fathers in the mid-thirties. Dawson (1982) proposes two possible explanations; first, mid-life is usually

associated with a personal re-evaluation of accomplishments and of goals. Through this process, the father may realize feelings of inadequacy and impotence in both his individual and marital life. In this instance he may turn to his daughter for fulfillment of these emotional needs. Secondly, the relationship may be based purely on sexual attraction, the father may view his wife as aging and becoming physically less attractive during these middle years. This would be about the time the eldest daughter reached puberty emerging as a sexually attractive female.

Summitt (1978) suggests these men are characteristically monogamous, and generally adultery is not a consideration, however, they are vulnerable due to unfulfilled needs. Therefore, they may misread a daughter's advances for affection, and react to intimacy with sex. Finklehor (1984) refers to this choice of sexual abuse as "blockage"; frustrated by normal avenues for sexual and emotional gratification and too moralistic to consider extra-marital sex, the father chooses the daughter as a substitute, and proceeds as though involved in a courtship.

The daughter accepts this gradual transition, demonstrating pseudo-mature adult behaviour, generally accepted to be the result of on-going role reversal in which the child is parentified into the role of "little mother". This role ultimately includes sex with the father.

Perlmutter et al (1982) believe blended or remarried

(REM) families not only experience loosened sexual boundaries, but also a general increase in the sexual atmosphere of the home. Perlmutter et al (1982) have further observed the existence of pubescent teenagers further intensifies the sexual climate. Perlmutter et al suggest it is not uncommon for the pubescent daughter to experiment with a burgeoning sexual persona within the safe confines of the home. The reality is, that this may well generate a sexual response, with the daughter unwittingly becoming a victim of sexual abuse. The perpetrators motivation in this regard is sexual gratification rather than control, with the perpetrator responding, albeit inappropriately, to a perceived sexual advance.

d) Individual Pathology

Swanson and Biaggio (1985) through their survey of the professional literature concluded "fathers involved in Incest present a heterogeneous picture". This is consistent with multi-causal hypotheses. However, they did find some similarities: 1) they are usually not psychotic, 2) alcohol abuse or addiction is common, 3) there is a history of physical/sexual abuse in their family of origin as well as a pattern of disturbed parent-child relations.

Parker & Parker (1986) in their research of perpetrator early life experiences found both early life deprivation and early life instability identified commonly by perpetrator self-analysis. This is a common factor found in many studies (Summitt 1978, Pierce & Pierce 1985, Finklehor

1984, Sgori 1982).

"Many incestuous fathers grew up in very punishing, rejecting homes with distant disapproving fathers. These men share a tendency toward low self-esteem, poor impulse control, inadequate uncertain parenting and a high respect for control and discipline. The cycle of abuse tends to proliferate from one generation to the next including physical, verbal and sexual forms of child abuse." (Summitt 1978 p. 22).

As mentioned, alcoholism is also a common observance amongst several studies found in the literature (Herman 1981, Hoorwitz 1983, Justice 1979). Justice (1979) suggests the alcoholic father is extremely narcissistic, Herman (1981) suggests he is introverted; both would agree alcohol is used to loosen personal restraints and inhibitions. "Like violence, however, the fathers drinking was effectively concealed from outsiders . . . most fathers retained their ability to work and to conform to normal standards of public behaviour." (Herman 1981 p. 76).

In general, most offenders are respected members of their community and work places. Very few have engaged in any other criminal activity and exhibit few overt symptoms of deviance outside the family home (Dawson 1982, Herman 1981, Summitt 1978).

e) **Summary**

Four possible motivations to sexual abuse have been examined to this point. With pedophilia being the possible exception, it is important to understand that a single casual factor is usually not the case. In most instances it is a

combination of factors which lead to abuse. The four motivations examined here should not be considered as exhaustive or mutually exclusive. In an attempt to understand if these motives appear, or act differently in the two offender populations they will be treated as distinct, and comparisons made between the two offender populations. With regard to sexual abuse, there is very little research which has attempted a comparison of offender populations, particularly bio and step-fathers. Few hypothesis were able to be developed with respect to expected differences in motivation. Where possible hypothesis have been developed, if there is no expectation of difference, comparisons will be made to establish whether or not differences exist. Each of the four motivations will be elaborated upon separately.

1. Pedophilia

As earlier identified, pedophilia may well be one area where distinct differences are apparent between bio and step-fathers. Unless identified in the file as a confirmed pedophiliac we will be unable to determine if the offender is a pedophiliac. We can, however, examine indicators of a sexual attraction to children. In this regard we will record any known previous record of abuse of children incestuous or other.

2. Control

Throughout the literature, power and control are identified as primary motivators. No data was found to support any claim that either offender population is more prone to

dysfunctional uses of power and control. One speculation was found, that the sexual abuse may itself be the control or "power play" for step-fathers.

Again, for comparison, data will be collected in the following areas:

1. Tyrannical and passive personality descriptions.
2. Physical threats and physical abuse of victim, spouse and siblings.
3. Co-associated physical and sexual abuse.
4. Sexual acts victim was caused to perform.
5. Use of emotional bribery and duress.

At this point there is no expectation of difference relative to the two offender populations uses of power and control within their families.

3. Courtship

One would expect a courtship motivation would be best revealed by the characteristics of the abuse. Presumably, there would be no co-associated physical abuse or threats of abuse used to gain compliance. There would be only a single victim and the age of the victim would be conducive to a courtship fantasy; very likely an adolescent. It is further expected, the level of the abuse would be moderate with no sexual acts being performed by the victim.

Once again, no expectation exists as to whether bio or step-fathers are more prone than their counterpart to having courtship as a motivation.

4. Individual Pathology

A perpetrator's early life instability, including being abused and perpetrator alcohol/drug abuse, are common observances amongst "father" abusers. A less common observation is that of any major psychopathology as a disinhibitor or motivator. Information on these phenomena (abuse victim alcohol/drug abuse and emotional disturbance), will be collected and a comparison made between bio and step-fathers. No expectations regarding outcome are indicated throughout the literature, accordingly, none are expected in this study.

III OPPORTUNITY

Assuming motivation exists, the perpetrator then requires an opportunity to abuse. This essentially means unhampered access to a victim. In addition to the perpetrator, there are two key players in this regard, the victim and the non-perpetrating parent. In order for the perpetrator to maintain opportunity, complex inter-related factors amongst these "players" come into effect. At this point, it is important to examine what is known about both the non-perpetrating parent and the victim in order to understand how opportunity is maintained in these abusive situations.

a) Non-Perpetrating Parent

Dietz and Craft (1980) found through their literature review that mothers in incestuous families are typically characterized this way:

"Mothers in these families are generally viewed as passive dependent and submissive, chronically depressed, overburdened and unable to protect their daughters or exert a restraining influence on their husbands. They are described as unloving and rejecting as sexually frigid, as aware of the incest and perpetuating the abuse or colluding in it, as pushing their daughters into the maternal role, as failing to offer emotional support to their daughters or failing to report the incident, and as blaming the child for the occurrence of incest." (p. 603).

Based on their observations Dietz & Craft argue that much of what is available in the current literature is unintentionally biased, presents the mother in a negative way, and indicates that she consciously or unconsciously condones the incestuous activity. They conclude that this is misinformation, which leads to a commonly held belief by social workers working with incest families, that the mother assists the abuse to happen either by commission or omission.

Dietz & Craft may well be correct, however, as they themselves discovered the predominant view in the literature is that of a mother allowing incest by omission and actually benefiting in some ways (Sgori 1982, Dawson 1982, Kempe 1980). These authors argue the clues present in the family such as increased intimacy between father and daughter, personality changes in the daughter and increased sibling rivalry cannot be ignored by the mother. They may be originally misinterpreted, but eventually must come clear. There is agreement, that the mother is also a victim, but that she accepts the father/daughter "liaison" as a self-protective response. In

this regard, the daughter is "sacrificed" to protect the mother from unwanted sexual advances by the spouse; the father developing extra-marital relations or the complete dissolution of the family.

The opportunity for the father to abuse is often precipitated by an "absent" mother. Finklehor (1979) suggests girls who are living without a mother are three times more vulnerable to sexual abuse than the average. Dawson (1982) suggests "Many mothers are described as absent on a regular, frequent and predictable basis thereby not only failing to protect the child, but also providing opportunity for the sexual activity to take place." (p. 92). Additionally, absence does not necessarily mean a geographical absence, but rather can include, as Henderson (1972) describes, a psychological absence through emotional distance, constant illnesses, sexual frigidity and as an absence of on-going nurturing.

Explanations for the mother's complicity in the incestuous relationship abound. In very strong language, Kempe (1980) suggests, "Stories by mothers that they "could not be more surprised" can generally be discounted. We have simply not seen an innocent mother in long standing Incest." (p. 205). Finklehor (1984) advises:

"Mothers appear to be especially crucial in protecting children from abuse. Of course, there has been some criticism that mothers have been blamed too frequently for abuse ... but findings related to the importance of mothers in protecting children appear too regularly to be dismissed simply as sexism. There is growing evidence that when mothers

are incapacitated in some way, children are more vulnerable to abuse." (p. 58).

Agreeably, this "incapacitation" and resultant inability to protect may be in some instances the dual victimization of the mother and child in physically and emotionally abusive families.

Many believe they are powerless to stop the abuse, and indeed may well be. Others, may in addition to feeling powerless, experience peripheral benefits, and are, therefore, reluctant to stop the abuse. Many mothers in clinical samples (Summitt 1980) suspect, but cannot bridge the gap to believe. They cannot imagine the father initiating incest and they cannot believe they would not have seen overt signals. It is easier to accept that the daughter is lying than to face the almost total upset of the family, criminal prosecution of the spouse and community disgrace.

Indeed there very likely are mothers who do not know. Summitt (1980) uses two explanations: 1) implicit trust in the husband that the sanctity of the family relationships would never be harmed or upset by him purposely; and 2) careful deception; mothers are often shielded or deceived by both the father and the daughter. In many instances there may have been no meaningful clues to draw upon.

In the other extreme, Money and Werlwas (1982) and Summitt and Kryso (1978) report on collusional erotosexual pathology in parents who individually and simultaneously abused their children.

In summary, generally, the mothers seem to be lacking in social skills, role abdicating, psychologically and/or financially dependent, geographically and/or psychologically absent and physically and/or emotionally abused. "While the foregoing characteristics provide some understanding of the contribution factors and role of the mother in cases of father/daughter sexual abuse, these should not be considered as excuses for or used to minimize the individual responsibility of the father in initiating the abuse." (Dawson 1982)

b) The Daughters as Victims

With respect to opportunity, the victim's role goes beyond just being in close proximity to the perpetrator, particularly in situations involving many abusive incidents. Again, it is important to understand what is known about these daughters as victims.

Predominately the abuse begins when the daughter is pre-pubescent and continues through early adolescence and sometimes beyond. Herman's 1981 study found a mean age of onset of 10.4 years; Courtois (1982) found the most frequent onset age range to be ages 10 to 12 and the most frequent ages of termination to be 13 to 15 years.

In families with two or more daughters, the eldest daughter is the most likely to be the victim (Herman 1981, deYoung 1982). However, it is not uncommon that offenders choose to have multiple victims. Herman (1981) found in her study, twenty-eight percent confirmed instances of a father

abusing multiple siblings and another twenty-five percent where this was suspected. Still the majority are single victim situations, with the possible explanation being that secrecy is a hallmark of abuse, and exposure is more likely in multiple victim situations. Similarly, Swanson and Biaggio (1985) and deYoung (1981) suggest siblings may play a collusive role in maintaining the incest secret because they fear they may be selected as the next victim. Often the victim will remain quiet about the abuse fearing that the perpetrator would then move on to a younger sib.

Some authors (Henderson 1972, Hoorwitz 1983) argue it is favoured status and/or gifts that play a role in the reluctance of the daughters to disclose the sexual abuse. Courtois (1980) found twenty percent of her sample had specifically received "favours for participation", however, she concluded obedience was the key factor in participation. "Like most children, they had been taught to obey their elders and were very conflicted when told to do something they did not want to do." (Courtois 1980, p. 327).

In addition or instead of the receipt of gifts, daughters are coerced into the abuse through the use of physical and emotional threats. Pierce and Pierce (1985) through their attempts to understand why victims do not disclose sexual abuse, found: 1) twenty-eight percent of the sexual abuse victims in their study were also physically abused, 2) an additional thirty-two percent reported being threatened with physical

assault if they did not comply. Fully sixty percent of the victims lived in fear of not only sexual abuse, but additionally of physical abuse.

Helplessness becomes reinforced by the constant need for secrecy and the resultant isolation. In an attempt to make sense out of the situation the daughter begins to find virtue in the results of her victimization. She plays a stabilizing role in the family, she pleases her father, she protects her siblings, she assists or in some instances (Herman 1981, Cohen 1983) gains vengeance against the mother, and she may even come to enjoy the perks of a special position in the family. The child feels obligated and overpowered by the father, betrayed by the mother and unsure of outside community resources. Isolation often extends even into the extended family. There is nuclear family distrust and even hostility toward the extended family. Once a pattern of isolation is established it is strictly enforced. Isolation and avoidance form a coalition which makes disclosure and discovery less likely. Sgori (1982) argues constant fear of discovery leads to an extreme fear of authority and avoidance of authority figures in the community. The offender fears discovery, the victim associates authority with misuse of power and not benevolence.

Sgori (1982), Dawson (1982) and Hoorwitz (1983) all argue the incestuous family is a closed family system experiencing social and emotional isolation often compounded by geographic remoteness. Finklehor (1984) identified farm

children as being at greater risk because of both social and geographic isolation. Presumably being in close proximity to an active social network is a deterrent to abuse.

The fact that the victim is unable for whatever reason to make an effective disclosure, is in no way an indictment of her. Clearly, the perpetrator is entirely responsible for his actions, including seeing that the secret is maintained in order to continue to create opportunities for ongoing abuse. The daughter's role in this is just another aspect of her victimization.

c) **Summary**

Maintaining opportunity, maintaining the secret and maintaining the abuse all become synonymous in these abusive situations. Any of the participants in the abuse scenario could end the abuse through disclosure. The fact that many abuses are not single episodes begs the question, why were disclosures not made? Once again, the information that is available does not make comparisons between bio and step offenses. What is known about the non-perpetrating parents and the victims is typically not offender specific. It is also worth noting, that the maintenance of the secret is generally a complex inter-relation of several factors. The examination done here will separate the non-perpetrating parents and victims by offender groups for comparison, using what is known through the literature as a benchmark.

Non-Perpetrating Parents

The following variables are commonly observed throughout the literature relative to the non-perpetrating parent's role in maintaining opportunity. Information will be collected and comparisons between bio and step-spouses will be made. There are no expectations as to outcome.

- 1) Unaware -- indicates the mother's lack of knowledge of the abusive incident.
- 2) Refused to Believe -- informed or had knowledge of an alleged sexual abuse between their mate and their child without acknowledging it at any level.
- 3) Refused to Report -- informed of abuse and believed, but did not report.
- 4) Passive Encouragement -- evidence of subtle encouragement of the abuse, but not participating.
- 5) Active Encouragement -- overt encouragement, including participation.
- 6) Feared Perpetrator -- afraid of perpetrator threatened, but not abused physically.
- 7) Abused By Perpetrator -- physical or sexual abuse by the perpetrator.
- 8) Previous Sexual Abuse Victim -- as a child.
- 9) Chronic Mental or Physical Illness -- regular and debilitating to point of upset of normal life pattern.
- 10) Often Absent -- refers to regular absence from home leaving perpetrator unhindered access (for example, shift work).

Victims

Again, the following variables are commonly observed throughout the literature in an attempt to understand the victim's role in maintaining the secret. As with the non-perpetrating spouse, there are no expectations as to outcome. Information will be collected, and comparisons made between bio and step victims.

- 1) Received Gifts -- bribed with material goods or money to participate in abuse.
- 2) Physical Threats -- threatened, but not physically abused.
- 3) Physically Abused -- in conjunction with presence of sexual abuse.
- 4) Emotional Duress -- use of emotional bribery, such as family breakup; removal of child, etc. to gain compliance.
- 5) Previous Sexual Abuse by Other Perpetrator -- refers to sexual abuse by any other, including family and non-family members.
- 6) Social Isolation -- identifies as socially detached family, including limited community and social contact.
- 7) Geographic Isolation -- identifies a family geographically removed or isolated.
- 8) Extended Family Isolation -- identifies a family detached by distance or other reason from extended family contact.
- 9) Multi-Problem Family -- refers to families which are experiencing on-going difficulty in many areas of living as a whole, or individual members, simultaneously.

CHAPTER III

DETERRENTS AND INHIBITIONS

I INTRODUCTION

Being motivated to sexually abuse a child and having opportunity to perpetrate the abuse are two major elements in the sequencing of an abuse situation. They are not, however, the only determinants as to whether an abuse will occur or not. Any abuser must still overcome the social and psychological inhibitions and deterrents that exist to prevent sexual abuse of children, particularly intra-familial sexual abuse.

Through the literature review undertaken here, three major inhibitions or deterrents emerged. Adult/child sexual taboos, attachment and likelihood of disclosure all should function in a way which bridles any motivation to abuse that may exist. The fact that abuse does exist is clear proof that these deterrents are not effective in all situations. Whether or not these conventional deterrents function or exist differently in structurally different families is worth further examination. In an attempt to understand these deterrents they will be elaborated upon and where possible comparisons made between the offender groups of step and bio-fathers.

II ADULT/CHILD SEXUAL TABOOS:

An understanding of the concept of inhibition is of primary importance in attempting to discern differences between

bio and step-fathers. Essentially, what conventional social/psychological inhibitions and deterrent's exist to prevent sexual abuse? Russell (1984) suggests a major, if not the major, difference is the incest taboo. Both categories of fathers must deal with the violation of legal sanctions, contravention of societal norms and the resultant marital/family dissolution. Only the bio-father, by the purest definition, violates the incest taboo.

Almost every society in history has had a taboo against Incest (Henderson 1972, Richards 1972, Shepher 1983). Sexual partners are classified as permissible or not, based on kinship. In most societies contraventions of this taboo are judged harshly. Such is the case in Judeo-Christian folklore.

In Genesis, Lot's two daughters get him intoxicated and seduce him, both becoming pregnant as a result. This pregnancy was intentional as the girls hoped to give the father a male son to continue the family bloodline. Both daughters gave birth, one to Moab, father of the Moabites, the other, Benanmi, the father of the Ammomites. Because Moab and Benanmi were conceived in a father/daughter union, we are also told "An Ammomite or a Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth generation shall they not enter the congregation of the Lord forever." (Deuteronomy 23:3)

The message is a clear condemnation of the incestuous act. Similar examples are found in the folklore of the ancient Greeks.

In the story of Oedipus Rex, following a rather complex series of coincidences, including the slaying of his own father, Oedipus realizes he has consummated a marriage to his own mother. This revelation brought Oedipus to experience such guilt that he gouged out his own eyes.

In another Greek myth, Zeus is alleged to have married his mother after murdering his father. The children of this union were described as a "family of lesser gods". Loosely interpreted, this seems consistent with the commonly held assumption that inbreeding has harmful genetic effects. Whether the Greeks conceived and understood at some level that inbreeding would be harmful is not a question to be answered here. What is relevant is the introduction of an Incest Taboo based on a perceived deleterious consequence. In fact, the theoretical concept of "lesser" or mutated offspring of blood relatives never really came into its own until the nineteenth century, as a result of Mendel and Darwin's work, particularly the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest.

Very likely, since the occurrence of genetic deviance is higher in incestuous relations, the observation was made that "lesser offspring" resulted from Incest (Shepher 1983, C.O.S.O.C.Y. 1984). These observations were propagated through cultural folklore and mythology. In a book entitled Tales from the Smokehouse, H. Schwarz has collected fifteen legendary erotic stories of the Canadian Indian.

"Like all peoples, the Indians have stories of Incest, bestiality, polygamy and

castration. These were not told for their own sake; a moral or social truth was drawn from them, which instructed people in the disastrous consequences of social misbehaviour. Thus even the mighty Chiefton Nanabijou becomes the subject of ridicule and meets his punishment as he lusts for his daughter." (Schwarz 1974 p. 8).

Our folklore has provided moral and ethical reasons to prohibit incestuous relations. Our science has provided biological reasons. Simply, if family inbreeding were to take place the human species would not survive; genetic mutation and physical impairment would result. Shepherd (1983) argues:

"Lower organisms practice asexual reproduction, higher organisms sexual reproduction. Among the latter most organisms prefer outbreeding. The amount of inbreeding tolerated depends on the general strategy of the organism. Too close inbreeding - Incest - is avoided by most plants and animals because it brings about increasing homozygosity, a usually dangerous situation from the evolutionary point of view." (p. 132).

Shepherd (1983) undertook an extensive review of the literature available on both domestic animal inbreeding as well as human inbreeding. He concludes "Because of the moral impossibility of experimenting with humans the evidence for humans is necessarily less than that for animals. It is however, sufficient to show that inbreeding is harmful." (p. 90). In fact, Shepherd reported on studies that found as many as 31% of samples of Incest progeny suffered mortality or severe disability. The C.O.S.O.C.Y. (1984) conducted a similar survey of available literature on Incest progeny; their findings:

"Extensive studies on animals and humans have

demonstrated that mortality and morbidity are increased and that growth and vigour are decreased in the first generation offspring of closely consanguineous parents as compared with offspring of unrelated parents ... Although it is difficult to compare the findings of the studies, nevertheless they are in general agreement on one point, namely, that children of Incest are at high empirical risk of abnormality, severe mental retardation and early death." (p. 765).

The C.O.S.O.C.Y. further concluded:

"In the committee's view, while the social and legal considerations given elsewhere in the report alone warrant the retention of the offence of Incest in the Criminal Code, the findings of the review of the genetic risks to children of Incest support further the case of retaining the Incest prohibition." (p. 767).

As demonstrated, one obvious difference between the incest taboo and the taboo against step-father-daughter sexual abuse is the potentially harmful genetic consequences of the incest relationship. It is important that research not negate the significance of this substantial difference between incestuous and non-incestuous intra-familial sexual abuse.

In step-parent abuse the step-father does not have this additional inhibiting factor of the incest taboo. Finklehor (1984) in his study of "What the Public Knows about Sexual Abuse" asked respondents to name the most likely offenders. Step-fathers came a close second to strangers, with bio-fathers a distant third. Apparently, as a society, we expect that step-fathers will abuse more often. This seems likely to be the result of a belief in the inhibiting function of the incest taboo.

It is important at this point to acknowledge and understand, for purposes of this research, the psychoanalytical concept of cathexis. Freud argued that personality is made up of three major systems: the id, the ego and the super-ego. Freud believed each made distinct contributions to the total personality. He further believed that because they so closely interact clear separation was impossible. He believed the id consisted of everything psychological that is inherited and that this inheritance, including instincts, would be present at birth. Freud referred to this as psychic energy, the power, or propelling force of all mental activity. Freud further suggested that this psychic energy could be concentrated, or invested; this process he called cathexis. Simply, cathexis is the concentration of, or investment of psychic energy in a conscious or unconscious mental representation, such as a concept, ideal image, fantasy or symbol. Freud believed the id was unrestrained and functioned on impulse. In an effort to balance this, the id transfers psychic energy to the ego and super-ego, thereby transforming subjective mental images, such as taboos, into objective reality, which can then be dealt with by the personality as a whole (Hinsey and Campbell 1970).

The amount of psychic energy invested depends upon the value assigned to the object or concept as it relates to harmony within the personality. Some energy is required to restrain the organism; conscience, a subsystem of the super-ego consumes energy to restrain the id. Conscience includes all morality

inherited and learned, with its main function to direct the organism to act in accordance with the moral standard of its society, thereby avoiding tension. The avoidance of tension is a primary cathexis of the entire personality.

The dynamics of personality are a complex interplay of these driving and restraining forces, the assignment of energy keeps the personality dynamic. Although fluid, Freud believed that sudden and unpredictable shifts in psychic energy were unlikely. More likely, psychic energy would remain fairly predictable in its assignment, relative to the organisms needs, wants, perceptions and integration of morality.

Understanding the concept of cathexis is key to understanding the difference between the incest taboo and societal taboos against intra-familial sexual abuse. Using Freud's concept of cathexis metaphorically, it is my belief that current and past moral principles within western society have caused a greater cathexis, or direction of psychic energy toward restraining incest, as opposed to other forms of intra-familial sexual abuse. This is not to say they are unrestrained, just less so. This cathexis, although performed on an individual level, is representative of a cultural phenomena. The foundation of this cathexic response to incest may be as Freud believed, an inheritance of instinct. At present, theories that suggest concepts such as taboos can be genetically transmitted are not widely accepted. Theorists, such as Shepher (1983), argue that any concept which is species preserving will become

innate to the species and will be transferred from generation to generation through genes. Whether we accept this view or not, we have as a society responded to incest with more vigor than to other forms of intra-familial sexual abuse.

As a society not only do we believe in the inhibitory function of the incest taboo, we have reinforced it in our legislation. Until 1988, Incest was covered under Section 150 of the Criminal Code of Canada (C.C.C.) as an offence involving either consensual or non-consensual sexual intercourse between blood relations. The maximum sentence was fourteen (14) years imprisonment. Interestingly, sexual intercourse with a step-daughter dealt with under Section 153 (1)(a) carried a maximum penalty of a two (2) year imprisonment.

What has emerged in the legislation as well as popular and professional literature is a dichotomy between incest and step-parent sexual abuse. The legislation, particularly the Criminal Code of Canada by nature of its penalty of fourteen (14) years imprisonment for incest, suggests it is in some way a more serious offence than sexual assault (ten year maximum), rape (ten year maximum) and importantly, step-child sexual abuse (two year maximum).

Throughout history the Incest Taboo has been a regulator of intra-familial sexual behaviour (Richard 1972). On the other hand, throughout history children were frequently culturally approved sexual objects in many non-incest situations. Only in a few societies was the Taboo extended to

include adoption, fosterage, milk brotherhood and other similar bloodline kinships (Radbill 1980). Although all child sexual abuse is now to be considered taboo, society still seems more outraged by incest. Interestingly, even the purveyors of child pornography have made this observation.

Herman (1981) suggests that pornography running low on marketable taboos has begun the assault on child sex, and that "kiddie porn" is flourishing. Research supports this assertion (C.O.S.O.C.Y. 1984, Finklehor 1984). Conte (1984) has found that increasingly, therapists report excessive use of pornography, including kiddie porn and that it has become a "cognitive disinhibitor"; that is, after repeated imagined sexual abuses of children, real abuse of children becomes easier. The C.O.S.O.C.Y. (1984) did a content analysis of eleven (11) readily available pornographic magazines. In comparing the types of sexual acts between adults and children depicted in the magazines, they found that of nineteen (19) acts examined, incest was the least often depicted. Accounting for only 0.6% of the total depicted sexual acts. Also, in an examination of advertised Sexual Products featuring children, the C.O.S.O.C.Y. found advertisers conveying an image of wide spread appeal of adult/child sexual relations. Again, only one (1) in six (6) or 17.5% of these advertisements referred to incest; the remaining 82.5% were non-incestuous adult/child sexual activity oriented (C.O.S.O.C.Y. 1984 p. 1236).

History appears to repeat itself relative to adult

sexual activity with children. Although modern pornography is marketing sexual images which are socially taboo, they have not in large part bridged the gap to the incest taboo. In the cases where incest fantasies are demonstrated, the C.O.S.O.C.Y. (1984) found they were examples of a father as the benevolent educator, or brother/sister liaisons. One might assume these to be more socially palatable forms of incest.

Western society for the most of history, has not considered that the state had a responsibility to protect children from sexual abuse, as is evident through our legislative response. Sexual abuse of children was common, and in some instances believed to be medicinal (Radbill 1980). Child protection and child rights were the prerogative of parenthood. As the head of the family the father had ultimate authority and children were a commodity to be used as such. The children of Dicken's Novels aptly demonstrate this attitude toward children. As western society became more affluent, Protective Services and legislation began to emerge. Initially, British Laws applied to the Colonies and eventually formed the basis for the initial Child Protection Legislation in Canada. The Children's Protection Act passed in 1892 signalled a milestone in child protection. Although no mention of sexual abuse appeared in this legislation, parents were held accountable for a "loss of morality" and the "prevention of depravity" in their children (Dymond 1923). It was not until 1984 in Ontario before Provincial Child Protection Legislation

spoke specifically about sexual abuse as being grounds for declaring a child as being in need of protection. The Child & Family Services Act (C.F.S.A.) 1984 Ontario, Section 37 (2)(c) states a child has suffered abuse if:

"The child has been sexually molested or sexually exploited by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child."

Of particular importance to this Legislation compared to its predecessor, The Child Welfare Act (C.W.A.) 1978 Ontario, is the specificity of sexual abuse or exploitation as a separate offence for the purposes of defining a child in need of protection. The C.W.A. dealt with sexual abuse under Section 19 (1)(b)(x)(i):

"A child in need of protection means a child whose life, health or morals may be endangered by the conduct of the person in whose charge the child is."

Current Child Protection legislation and practice is based on the concept that children are dependent upon parents and adults for their physical and emotional health and that exploitation, abuse or neglect of a child by an adult is unacceptable by society's standards. Sexual abuse has very clearly fallen into this category of unacceptable behaviour and society is mobilizing its legislation and authority to deal with what some refer to as the "last frontier of child protection".

Definitely, our society has accepted a taboo prohibiting sexual relations between step-parent and step-children.

However, in this author's opinion, to consider these two taboos as one is an error. The incest taboo is not the same as the taboo against non-incestuous intra-familial sexual abuse. Our society at levels ranging from Legislators to the marketers of pornography seem to understand that amongst current sexual taboos, the incest taboo stands alone as the most culturally and morally binding restraint of our sexual activities.

II ATTACHMENT:

a) Developmental Ties & Proximity:

In addition to the Incest Taboo, Perlmutter et al (1982) offer two basic differences related to family structure. In step-families there are lessened legal ties and lessened developmental ties, both of which are assumed to assist in preventing intra-familial sexual relations in biological families.

In all societies the family is presumed to offer some degree of physical, psychological, emotional and economic protection to its members. The evidence is overwhelming that our need for companionship and intimate, affectionate human response is vitally important to us. Most societies (North American included) rely almost entirely on the family to provide this nurturing, affectionate response. The protection of family life is integral to the protection of children from sexual abuse. Dawson (1982) elaborates:

"Here it is suggested that sexual relations between non-married family members would

stir up jealousies which would disrupt family life. Intra-family sexual activity would lead to role confusion, the evolving of strong passions between different family members and across generational boundaries. All of this would make harmonious family living impossible and precipitate family disintegration. Society could not tolerate such a development because it would threaten its very existence." (p. 5).

The Taboos against intra-familial sex from this point of view exist in a large part to create an environment conducive to family socialization functions, including the launching of children into adulthood thus preparing them to establish their own families. This perspective once again moves beyond the purely genetic consequences of "lesser offspring" by explaining the Taboo function in non-bloodline sexual contact.

Families avoided intra-familial sexual relations to evade the resultant rivalry, jealousy and quarrelling which would ultimately disrupt the co-operative ability of the family. It is clear that in our modern society and societies preceding us, contraventions of intra-familial sexual taboos have occurred.

In an attempt to understand this Finklehor (1984), questioned: why is the offender not deterred by conventional taboos, social inhibitions and sanctions? He has concluded that proximity, particularly the bio-fathers or step-fathers proximity to the daughter in early life, is a major contributing factor.

"Being a step-daughter or being separated presumably works to reduce the ordinary inhibitions that would exist against sex

between a natural father and daughter who had lived with each other continuously since the child's birth. These inhibitory mechanisms are sometimes viewed as quasibiological in nature coming into play merely as the result of proximity during early stages of development." (Finklehor 1984 p. 45).

The consanguineal connection between bio-father and daughter explains at least partially why fewer bio-fathers sexually abuse. In addition to the blood tie, the attachment process between bio-fathers and their daughters may well be stronger than that between step-fathers and daughters. Similarly, Herman (1981) argues the preschool and infant nurturing done by mothers in part explains why fewer mothers abuse. Russell (1984) has expanded this concept to include why step-fathers are more likely "...It follows from her (Herman) argument that step-fathers who enter the lives of their daughters when they are already past babyhood may be more likely to abuse them." (Russell 1984 pg. 20). Finklehor (1984) makes this same conclusion, being a step-parent reduces the developed inhibitions that exist between bio-fathers and daughters who have resided together since the child's birth.

A brief comment on the theories of attachment is necessary at this point. Attachment refers to a process of developing a relationship characterized by strong mutual feelings and emotional ties. The attachment process is a mutual system with milestones and stages, but with no clean end point. This process of attachment is vital in infancy as it lays the foundation for all later relationships. In the 1950's John

Bowlby undertook an examination of the effects of institutionalization on the development of children. What Bowlby discovered was a lack of opportunity for attachment between children and adult parent models (Bowlby 1980). In fact, Bowlby's research has resulted in the establishment of the current foster care system across North America. What's important about Bowlby's work here, is the notion of an opportunity to attach. Bretherton & Waters (1985) expanding on Bowlby's models of attachment are suggesting that newborns are sufficiently attuned to positive affect by a caregiver, that attachment begins at the very earliest interactions. Through work with infants up to the age of twelve months, Ainsworth et al (1978) discovered securely attached infants show joy in reunion and confidence in exploring their environments. Insecurely attached infants, showed ambivalence and outright rejection of their caregivers when reunited after separations. Building on Ainsworth et al, Main & Solomon (1988) believed insecure attachment caused, abused and neglected children to be unable to explore their environments, withdraw or attack strangers and totally ignore their primary caregiver upon being reunited.

Insecurely attached infants and toddlers develop typical patterned responses of irritability, aloofness and frustration, which can generate further negative responses from adults. Early non-nurturing experiences are the seeds of future difficulty. Lacking trust in caregivers and being unable to

explore their environment causes the child's attachments to cease to work and the self system closes (Basch 1988)

The implications of the attachment theory in this research are simply that proximity alone is not enough to ensure that attachment will develop. The process of attachment is reciprocal, beginning with and being sustained by, positive nurturing by an adult caregiver over time. Also, importantly the child's earliest experiences provide the foundation on which future attachments can develop.

The predominant research into the relationship between sexual abuse and attachment comes largely from the bio-social perspective. Parker & Parker (1986) are predominant in this research approach. In their 1986 study, Parker & Parker compared fifty-six (56) abusing fathers with fifty-four (54) non-abusing fathers (both groups included step-fathers) based on a four part hypothesis which covered: 1) early life deprivation, 2) early life instability within the perpetrator's birth home, 3) perpetrator absence and 4) perpetrator non-involvement in early childhood nurturance. Significantly, they found: 1) perpetrators spent less time in early life bonding with their children than did the non-abusing group; 2) perpetrators were more likely to be non-nurturing in the early life of their children than the non-abusing group; 3) specific to step-fathers they found the biological connection is not as important as proximity in early life, and involvement in early life nurturance. Step-fathers were no more likely to abuse if

present and actively involved in the early child rearing than bio-fathers who were also present and actively involved in early child care. Adding to Finklehor's belief that proximity to the child in early life is a major deterrent to later sexual abuse, Parker & Parker conclude; "It appears that it is not biological status as such, that is important in explaining the relationship between step-fathering and abuse, rather it is the absent step-father during this early period who is at risk" (p. 542 1986).

Perlmutter et al (1982) argues there is a loosening of sexual boundaries in remarried (REM) families as a result of family structure, which is non-biological, non-legal and typically does not involve proximity or developmental ties through years of growth and development. They further argue "Indeed, the only tie that step-related persons share is the close social and spatial tie, with its potential for emotional attachments to grow over time." (p. 83). Studies in anthropology have given considerable credibility to the theoretical assumption that developmental ties and spatial proximity affect levels of sexual abuse. Shepher (1983) undertook a review of social science research of communal living, particularly the Israeli Kibbutz and the Taiwanese Sim-Pua. Both the Kibbutz and the Sim-Pua are communal living situations in which people behave as family members but are not. Shepher (1983) concluded, "In each case, sexual relations between members are avoided, in spite of the fact that nobody forbids such relations. On the contrary, such relations are

normatively favoured in both societies." (p. 51). The avoidance of intra-communal sex was so extreme in the Kibbutz system that it brought its existence into jeopardy as second generation members looked outside for marital/sexual partners. Even with socialized acceptance of intra-communal marriages and sex, instinctive avoidance of sex with those with whom there were shared developmental ties was common.

In the case of the Sim-Pua, the parents of latency age children choose spouses for their children. The female child is adopted into the home of the male child and raised with him. As they come of age they are ceremonially married and then expected to consummate this marriage. These children regularly refuse and are characteristically reluctant. Studies of these marriages have found significantly higher rates of extra-marital sex, separation, divorce and lower rates of reproduction. As in the case of the Kibbutz, these "mates" are socialized to be sexually responsive to one another and yet because of their spatial and developmental ties they are typically sexually indifferent and look elsewhere for mates. Shepher's conclusion is that these examples of sexual avoidance are triggered by situation and developmental ties rather than prohibition or taboo.

It would follow from Shepher's argument that a step-father who has not cohabited with the daughters for an extended period, particularly during the child's early years, would not experience sexual avoidance to the same degree as a father who

had cohabited with the daughter. There is some corroboration of Shepherd's theory in Faller's (1981) observation that sexual molestation by father figures is initiated quickly in relation to the length of the relationship. Although proximity increases opportunity, any consumation of a sexual act requires motivation. It seems likely that this motivation is diminished as healthy asexual relationships develop over time. Therefore, avoidance of intra-familial sexual relations may be as much the result of healthy attachment as they are the result of taboos.

III DISCLOSURE

At first glance disclosure seems somewhat out of place in a conversation about deterrents to sexual abuse. However, recognizing that sexual abuse of a child is both immoral and illegal within western society, gives us a context for this discussion.

When any individual contemplates a criminal act, or an act which breaches contemporary morality, they must consider all potential outcomes. The answer to the question: "What if I get caught?" is often enough of a deterrent to prevent the act. If, however, we make a minor variation to this question: "What are my chances of being caught?" the situation becomes entirely different.

In determining whether or not to proceed, our individual has to struggle with the worst and best potential outcomes; as well as an analysis of the likelihood of being

caught. In this regard, a very complex, albeit maybe brief, cost/benefit analysis is undertaken by the individual. The outcome of this analysis, in very simple terms, is a decision to proceed or not. This very individual assessment of risk and worth is not measurable given the confines of this study. Within our confines we can, however, consider the question: What is the likelihood of being caught?; and further, is this likelihood different for biological vs step-fathers? In this regard we will examine three variables: i) family collusion; ii) the child's developmental stage; and iii) level of sexual abuse.

a) **Family Collusion**

Perlmutter et al (1982) through their investigation have concluded: "...it appears that the REM family is unlikely to reinforce incestuous relationships by a conspiracy of silence and unconscious collusion as may occur in the nuclear family." (p. 88). Further to this, Conte and Berliner (1981) have also observed that the relationship of the offender to the child is important in regard to subsequent disclosure. They concluded that the closer the relationship, the more ambivalent the victim was and the longer period of time, on average, to disclose the abuse. They found sixteen percent (16%) of incest cases (N=583) vs. fifty-six percent (56%) of non-incest cases reported the occurrence within forty-eight (48) hours. Conte and Berliner further reported, in terms of a family "conspiracy of silence" there is a difference. "... in 60 percent of the family and 85

percent of the non-family the non-offending parent or parenting figure took immediate action to protect the child from further abuse." (Conte and Berliner 1981 p. 603).

The assumption here of course is that step-fathers will benefit less from any family conspiracy of silence and, therefore, be more often and more rapidly disclosed than their bio-counterparts.

b) Developmental Stage

The developmental stage of the child also plays a large role in disclosure. Mian et al (1986) in their study of victims under the age of six discovered purposeful disclosure increases with age within the infant and Oedipal stages. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the five and six year olds purposely disclosed compared with only fifty-one percent (51%) of the preschoolers. Additionally, they found there is little likelihood of physical injury sustained as a result of the sexual abuse. The C.O.S.O.C.Y.'s 1984 National Hospital Survey concluded that substantially more children were emotionally harmed than physically injured, "long-term emotional harms were over six times as likely as long-term physical injuries." (p. 697). Similarly, Mian et al (1986) found only fifty-one percent (51%) of their total sample had made a purposeful disclosure and forty-nine percent (49%) had been disclosed accidentally. Only twenty-four percent (24%) of the accidental disclosures were the result of physical symptomology.

Discovery of sexual abuse of young children is

difficult as very few children purposefully disclose. Symptomology which indicates abuse is generally behavioural and not readily connected to an etiology of sexual abuse. Mian et al speculate young children often do not perceive the activity as wrong and therefore remain silent.

In agreement, deYoung (1987) argues that the young child lacks both the cognitive process to establish offence danger and offender danger and a lack of language skills to bring clarity to disclosure. Goodwin (1982) in her review of preschool age disclosure, agrees diagnosis of sexual abuse at this age is difficult. Cryptic statements and inaccurate descriptions of anatomy and activity can be perceived as wild fantasy and imagination. Additionally, Goodwin concluded that latency age victims (9 - 12) account for the majority of sexual abuse disclosures. In Phelan's 1986 study she found predominately, step-fathers initiated the sexual abuse during the latency stage. Two factors are important here. First, step-fathers, by the nature of the step-family, are most likely exposed to Oedipal and latency aged children; both groups are developmentally capable of discernable disclosure. Connected to this is the second factor that the developmental ties and relationship bond would not be as strong in these step-relationships as they would be in bio-relationships due to the relationship duration. One is led to the conclusion that victims of a step-father would be more likely to purposely disclose the abuse.

Step-fathers may well be "over-reported" in this regard compared to bio-fathers, again contributing to seemingly disproportionate numbers of "step" abuse due to a probable higher disclosure rate.

c) Level of Sexual Abuse:

"It is agreed by most researchers that incest can have both short-term and long-term negative effects on the victim. That it appears to not do so with all victims should be a source of both relief and curiosity." (deYoung 1981 p. 567). It is true that not all sexual abuse victims are damaged to the same extent. This should be expected since sexual abuse is not itself constant, how could we expect its outcomes to be constant. The range of experiences for victims is essentially limitless depending upon a myriad of contributing variables. In fact, it would be erroneous to rule out contributing variables in examining impact, particularly as it may relate to disclosure.

Pierce and Pierce (1985) have concluded "The sexually abused child will be affected not only by who participates in the abuse but also by how they were abused." (p. 45). The concept of severity is not commonly defined throughout the professional literature. However, three studies were found in which bio/step-father comparisons were made based on an offence or severity level. Russell (1984) used a three category continuum: 1) very serious - inclusive of forced vaginal penetration, fellatio, analingus, cunnilingus and anal

intercourse; 2) serious - inclusive of forced digital penetration, unclothed breast manipulation and simulated intercourse; 3) least serious - inclusive of forced kissing and sexual touching of clothed victim including genitalia.

Similarly, Phelan (1986) used a three step continuum; 1) fondling; 2) oral sex/fondling; 3) intercourse. The C.O.S.O.C.Y. (1984) National Police Force Survey used a fourteen (14) point offence category based on charges laid, and under what section of the Criminal Code. Some are self-explanatory, the rest will be elaborated upon: 1) rape; 2) attempted rape; 3) intercourse with a female under 14; 4) intercourse with female under 16; 5) intercourse with feeble-minded; 6) indecent assault/female; 7) indecent assault/male (indecent assault is assaultive sexual touch); 8) incest; 9) seduction; 10) buggery - anal intercourse; 11) gross indecency - never defined by statute - dependent upon circumstance; 12) indecent act - anything done publicly - exposure, open masturbation; 13) corrupting a child; 14) contributing to Juvenile Delinquency.

Two of these three studies very clearly indicate that step-fathers abuse at more serious levels than bio-fathers.

Russell (1984) concluded "When step-fathers sexually abused their daughters they were much more likely than any other relative to abuse them at the most serious level." (p. 19). She found forty-seven percent (47%) of the step-father abuse was reported as very serious compared with twenty-six percent (26%) of the bio-fathers.

The C.O.S.O.C.Y. (1984) National Police Force Survey found for both bio and step-fathers, indecent assault was the most frequent offence. Pertinent to this study is the discrepancy between bio and step-father (including common-law) in relation to three other serious offences. Thirteen father figures raped or attempted rape as compared to five bio-fathers; thirty-four step-fathers had intercourse with a child under sixteen as compared with six bio-fathers. Buggery occurred twice with bio-fathers involved and eight times with step-fathers. According to this report, accepting rape, sexual intercourse and buggery as three very serious offences, the data suggests step-fathers were more likely to abuse at the very serious level than bio-fathers.

Phelan found almost the reverse of Russell. Phelan's (1986) report concluded six out of fifteen (40%) of the bio-father cases involved full intercourse whereas four out of fifteen (25%) of the step-father cases involved full intercourse. However, some noteworthy alerts are necessary. Phelan additionally concluded "Biological fathers more frequently began molesting their daughters when they had reached adolescence (12 - 16) whereas step-fathers more frequently began the sexual activity when the children were pre-adolescent (8 - 11)." (p. 536). As a result of these "onset" age differences, Phelan's conclusion may be somewhat spurious. The option of intercourse is greatly precluded by anatomical development therefore step-fathers would understandably have abused at a

less serious level by Phelan's standards. In fact, in Phelan's study she found fifteen out of sixteen step-fathers abused pre-adolescent victims. Further, she found four out of sixteen abused via full intercourse. Therefore, even assuming one of the four intercourse abuses was the single adolescent, three step-father abuses were full intercourse with a child aged 8 - 11. These may in fact represent the most serious abuses of all in Phelan's study. Additionally, Phelan's sample group was drawn from a population of families attending for treatment. She concludes "Furthermore the possibility exists that only certain types of families became connected with the study's treatment facility ... the more serious step-fathers may not have reached the program ..." (Phelan (1986) p. 539). Similarly, Server and Janzen (1986) found over a two year period of observation of a sexual abuse treatment program that only eleven (11) of fifty-five (55) families referred for treatment had reconstituted or were working toward reconstitution. They concluded that the more problematic the family, the less amenable they were to treatment and importantly, the less likely they were as a family to attend for treatment. A closer analysis of Phelan's sample group and the characteristics of the abuse as compared to victim age certainly cast doubt upon the confidence of Phelan's conclusion that bio-fathers abuse at the more serious level. In fact, some evidence within Phelan's study may indicate the opposite. Additionally, Phelan's sample size was small, this alone raises concern with regard to

credibility.

Although all sexual abuse invariably impacts upon the victim to some degree, there are indications that the severity of the offence can greatly increase the impact and the likelihood of disclosure (Conte and Schuerman 1987). Additionally, there is the likelihood that offender/victim relationship and family structure also play key roles in offence disclosure. Once again, if, as suspected, step-fathers are abusing at the more serious levels, then it seems likely that more of these abuses would be disclosed. Thereby adding to the doubt about the accurateness of current incidence rates.

d) Summary

Adult-child sexual taboos, victim-offender attachment and the likelihood of disclosure are all deterrents to intra-familial adult-child sexual activity. In this author's opinion, to assume they work exclusive of one another would be an error. Given the confines of this research, measuring how they interact and in what proportion to one another is impossible. We can, however, examine them individually as to their influence and the role they play relative to the offender categories of bio and step-fathers. Through the literature review undertaken here, several hypothesis were developed relative to each of the three deterrents. Each will be examined individually.

i) Adult-Child Sexual Taboos

The primary hypothesis here is that to consider the incest taboo and the taboo prohibiting step-father-daughter sex

as homogeneous is an error. Importantly, there is the belief that the incest taboo is a greater deterrent to sexual abuse than is its "step" counterpart.

Not accounting for possibly higher reporting rates, current incidence rates are demonstrating that step-fathers are more likely to abuse than their bio-counterparts. This would seem to indicate that the differences in taboos may be in part responsible for the apparent discrepancies in the reported levels of abuse.

In a file survey, there is no absolute measure of the influence of either the incest taboo or the taboo against non-incestuous child sex. One would expect, however, to find: 1) a greater incidence of step-father sexual abuse; 2) due to the genetic basis of the incest taboo one would expect to see an avoidance of pro-creating activities in bio-father abuses; 3) if the child sex taboo is weaker we could expect a possible short relationship duration before the abuse onset by the father figure; and 4) a more critical test of taboo differences will be the absence of any other significant contributing factor(s). Simply, if no other explanations for increased incidence rates arise in this research, the inference would be that the taboo differences are the major distinction between offender types.

ii) Attachment

In addition to the recognition of the taboos as social regulators, one must consider whether or not the relationship between the victim and the offender plays a role in deterring

sexual abuse. It is argued here that any breach of the taboos requires considerable motivation and that this motivation will be diminished as healthy asexual attachments develop over time. Therefore, healthy attachments may be as much or more a deterrent to sexual abuse than are the taboos.

Our ability to examine nurturing efforts by an offender is limited in a file survey. We can, however, measure proximity to the child during the early years of the victim's development. It is widely accepted by child development theorists that the strongest mutual attachment is formed during the first three years of the child's life. It is hypothesized that this lack of early age attachment contributes to the increased incidence rate of step-father abuse. Additionally, a short relationship duration prior to abuse onset in older victims would demonstrate a similar lack of attachment. It is also hypothesized that step-fathers will demonstrate diminished attachment through the characteristics of the abuse. In this regard, a higher incidence of coassociated physical and sexual abuse is expected. Additionally, the step-offender will demand more sexual acts be performed to him by his victim.

iii) Disclosure

Disclosure has the feature of being both a deterrent and an outcome. The expectation of disclosure functions as the deterrent, the actual disclosure is one possible outcome of the abuse. There are clearly limited claims that can be made as to the deterrent effect of disclosure through the examination of a

sample of disclosed offenders. The focus of this research relative to disclosure is to examine its effect on the reliability of current incidence rates. The hypothesis is that step-fathers have a greater likelihood of being disclosed than do their "bio" counterparts. This hypothesis is based on sub hypothesis developed in each three of variables examined, they are:

Family Collusion

The hypothesis here is that step-fathers will benefit less from any family conspiracy of silence than their "bio" counterparts. In this regard, one would expect high rates of spousal disclosure and nuclear family disclosure in step-families. Additionally, there is an expectation that spousal and nuclear family disclosure in step-families will be more rapid than in bio-families.

Developmental Stage

Relative to Developmental Stages, it is hypothesized that bio-fathers will tend to abuse a younger victim, therefore, impairing discernable disclosure. Further it is believed "bio" victims will purposely disclose less often and accidentally disclose more often than step victims. Additionally, it is expected step-fathers will abuse on average an older victim and these abuses will be disclosed both accidentally and purposefully more rapidly than abuse by bio-fathers.

Level of Abuse

It would seem likely that offences of the most severe

sort might prompt quicker disclosure, both purposely and accidentally. It follows that if step-fathers are more likely to abuse at this very serious level (Russell 1984) that more of these offences would be disclosed. This would be partially due to the severity of the offence but also contributed to by the associated factors of relationship strength and family structure (Perlmutter et al 1982). Further, it is hypothesized that the more severe the abuse the more quickly it will be disclosed either accidentally or purposefully. Additionally, a step-father perpetrating a severe abuse will be disclosed more rapidly than a bio-father committing a similar abuse, particularly in purposeful disclosures. It is further expected that step-fathers will abuse at a more serious level, more often than their biological counterparts. This will include serious sexual abuses and combined physical and sexual abuses. Further, it is anticipated that more step-father victims will be injured by the perpetrator as a result of step-fathers abusing at a more serious level.

Also, there will be a greater percentage of accidental disclosures in bio-father abuses. Lastly, the length of the abusive relationship will be longer in bio-father abuses as a consequence of less rapid disclosures by bio-victims.

All of the above when combined infer a conclusion that step-father abuses are more likely to be detected therefore casting some doubt on current incidence rates.

Interestingly, if we return to the question of

disclosure as a deterrent, it seems that step-fathers would be more likely disclosed than their bio counterparts. Since in this study we are examining a group of bio and step offenders, the likelihood of detection was not a successful deterrent. Therefore, any claims we might make about disclosure as a deterrent would be dubious. However, this makes for interesting further study. Common sense would indicate that if you expected detection you would avoid the act. For either offender category, the question remains, is there a conscious calculation of risk, and to what extent does this function as a deterrent. Clearly, these are not questions which can be answered within this study. They do, however, warrant closer attention, as it is this author's experience that program planners make the assumption that an "abuse proofed" child is a deterrent to a potential offender. This planning assumption certainly needs testing.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

I INTRODUCTION

This study will describe the characteristics of biological father/daughter sexual abuse and step-father/step-daughter sexual abuse for comparative purposes. The information will be gleaned from files opened for abuse investigations in the City of Thunder Bay, involving either bio or step-fathers as the alleged perpetrator. These files were compiled by Child Welfare Social Workers employed by the Family and Children's Services of the District of Thunder Bay (F.&C.S.) during the course of their work activity. The Thunder Bay Family and Children's Services is a mandated Child Welfare Agency in the Province of Ontario. The time span from which information was gathered was January 1, 1985 through to August 29, 1989 inclusive.

II SETTING:

a) The Community

According to the 1988 Service Plan of the Thunder Bay Family and Children's Services, the area served by the city office is 10,000 square miles. The total population of this area is 121,498. The area is composed of the City of Thunder Bay - population 112,272; the Municipality of Upsala - population 949; the remainder is Unorganized Municipalities and three Indian Reserves - population 8,277 (Appendix A). The predominant ethnic

groups in order of prevalence are British, French, Italian, Finnish, Ukrainian and Native Status Indians (largely Ojibway) (Thunder Bay Economic Development 1987).

The three Indian Reserves; Fort William Indian Reserve, Lac des Milles Lac Indian Reserve and Seine River Indian Reserve are under the jurisdiction of the Robinson-Superior Treaty. There is virtually no economic base on these reserves except for self-employment activities.

The population of the area has remained relatively constant over the period between National Census Taking 1976 - 1986 with slow growth of 899 over this period (Stats Can. 1987).

b) The Agency

The Family and Children's Services of the District of Thunder Bay (F.&C.S.) incorporated as The Children's Aid Society of the District of Thunder Bay is established under the jurisdiction and mandated by The Child and Family Services Act, 1984). The legal mandate is contained in Section 15 (3) of the Act. "The functions of a Children's Aid Society are to:

1. Investigate obligations or evidence that children who are under 16 years of age or are in the Society's care or under its supervision may be in need of protection;
2. Protect where necessary, children who are under the age of 16 years of age or are in the Society's care or under its supervision;
3. Provide guidance, counselling and other services to families for protecting children or for the protection of circumstances requiring the protection of children;
4. Provide care for children assigned or committed to its care under this Act;
5. Supervise children assigned to its supervision under this

Act;

6. Place children for adoption under Part VII; and
7. Perform any other duties given to it by this or any other act."

The 1988 Service Plan states the agency mission and purpose thusly:

Mission Statement:

"Family and Children's Services of the District of Thunder Bay believes that:

1. Children have the right to grow and develop in a family that provides permanency, stability, safety, love and constructive social values.

Having this belief we further believe that:

2. Families have a right to belong to a community that values their identity, dignity and self-determination and which also supports their efforts in planning for themselves and their children.
3. Communities must accept responsibility for providing the resources and the environment that protects the rights of children and their families."

Acting on these beliefs, Family and Children's Services of the District of Thunder Bay exists to effectively serve the community by promoting the best interests, protection and well being of children and their families.

c) The Staff

The agency is divided necessarily into District Offices and the Head Office located in the City of Thunder Bay. Since only file information gathered through investigations of abuse done in the Thunder Bay Office catchment area will be undertaken, the following descriptions are only pertinent to the Thunder Bay

Office.

There are forty (40) professional social work staff (college trained, B.S.W. or M.S.W.) divided amongst eleven (11)

Units:

1. Intake

Responsible for investigations of all allegations of a child in need of protection short of physical or sexual abuse. Additionally, responsible for assistance in other family problems such as parent/child conflict, housing and economic problems. Community education and prevention.

2. Child Abuse

Responsible to investigate referrals of physical and sexual abuse. Community education and prevention.

3. Family Services

Responsible for on-going family service, post intake or abuse involvement. Provide or arrange treatment, respite, alternate care and prevention to families in need of or ordered to participate in Child Welfare Services.

4. Legal Services

Responsible for provision of legal services for the Agency in Child Welfare Court.

5. Adoption

Responsible for pre-and post-adoption services.

6. Permanent Care

Responsible for service to Crown Wards and long-term special needs of children.

7. Child Development

Responsible for service to foster homes and the children in them who are developmentally handicapped.

8. Foster

Responsible for recruitment, training and support of foster care resources as well as placement of children needing "in care" services.

9. Outreach

Streetwork Social Work Program.

10. Single Parent Services

Responsible to counsel and support single mothers - pre and post-delivery.

11. Residential

Responsible to develop, deliver and/or resource institutional placements of "in care" children.

There are seven (7) front-line Supervisors for the eleven (11) Units (B.S.W. or M.S.W. trained). There are six (6) Senior Management positions inclusive of the Executive Director. The Agency operations are governed by a Board of Directors elected at large from the community with two positions open to City Council Members (Appendix B.).

III METHODOLOGY:

a) Preamble

The intention of this research is to conduct an analysis of sexual abuse investigations undertaken within the catchment area of the Thunder Bay Family and Children's Services Head Office. Only investigations in which the alleged perpetrator was a biological father or a father figure (earlier defined to include paramours and legal step-fathers) will be examined. The bulk of these referrals will have been investigated by the Child Abuse Unit although some may have been jointly or singly investigated by

another other Unit within the Agency.

Research of this kind is valuable in that to date there is little demographic information which compares these two offender populations. As earlier presented, research has not yet established whether bio-father abuse and father figure abuse represent the same phenomenon. Further, there is the question of whether field level practitioners should approach these two family types differently in any or all aspects of service delivery.

Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook (1960) suggest descriptive studies fulfill two requirements of research:

- 1) "To portray accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or group (with or without specific initial hypotheses about the nature of these characteristics);
- 2) To determine the frequency with which something occurs or with which it is associated with something else." (p. 50).

Further, Sellitz et al (1960) suggest descriptive studies are not limited to any one method of data collection, commonly they include singly or in combination, interviews, questionnaires, direct observation, and importantly analysis of existing records. Similarly, Finestone and Kahn (1975 p. 38) propose the purpose of a descriptive study "is to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon when the characteristics of interest are known." (p. 62). Once again, Finestone and Kahn recognize "available statistical reports" as valuable sources of information for descriptive study purposes.

Descriptive research has particular value in research areas in which knowledge is limited. Used in this fashion,

descriptive studies using secondary source are present in the current literature. Pierce and Pierce (1985) analyzed sexual abuse reports compiled by the Illinois Child and Family Services - Protective Services Unit. They chose this research design to "generate findings for increasing the knowledge base of protective service workers." (p. 38). Mian et al (1986) reviewed and analyzed the charts of sexually abused children compiled by the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children. Once again this research design was chosen to fill a knowledge gap. Mian et al concluded "...no published reports to date have concentrated specifically on this young population. The purpose of this paper is to present some initial findings." (p. 223).

Descriptive research is used literally to describe individual, group or situational phenomena and events. Through the analysis of secondary source data, researchers can begin to develop explanatory hypothesis about the relationship between factors. Through an objective examination of the assembled data, supporting facts will emerge that combined will infer a conclusion about these relationships. It does not predict causal relationships but it may provide reliable information from which to build on.

b) Variables

Variable selection was based on a three part process. First, the variable was expected to be in the files to be examined. Second, the literature review disclosed several factors which were considered to be associated with sexual abuse. Third,

a tentative list of variables was presented to five social workers employed by Family and Children's Services of the District of Thunder Bay who specialize in child abuse investigations. Based on the file content expectations and the recommendations of the panel of child abuse investigators deletions and additions were made to the list of variables to be examined. The variables were further sub-divided into four (4) sections of the data collection instruments: 1) Description of Report; 2) Description of Perpetrator; 3) Description of Victim; and 4) Situational Factors (contributing to abuse). What follows is the operational definitions of the variables used in this study.

Additionally, if multiple variables are appropriate under the same heading they were all recorded. For example, under the category "situational factor - the perpetrator". If the perpetrator was both an alcoholic and had an incest history both variables were recorded.

1) Description of Report:

- a) Previously open - several authors (Maynard 1984, Pierce and Pierce 1985) have found as many as one third of the cases had been previously opened by Child Welfare Authorities prior to occurrence of most recent incidence including who was the alleged perpetrator.
- b) Currently open - this will indicate whether the most recent sexual abuse occurred in a family currently receiving C.A.S. service.
- c) Relationship of Perpetrator - this refers to the identity of the perpetrator(s) causing the file to be open in a previous abuse.
- d) Referral Source - indicates source of referral by agency and family.
- e) Disclosure type - indicates either purposeful (child meant to

disclose abuse) or accidental (discovered by accident (i.e. medical exam)).

- f) First abusive incident - refers to first abuse by current perpetrator.
- g) Duration between most recent offence and disclosure.
- h) Level of report substantiated - refers to the highest level at which the allegations were substantiated to be true or whether they were unsubstantiated.
- i) Duration between first offence and disclosure relative to most current investigation.

2. Description of Perpetrator:

- a) Relationship to child - of alleged perpetrator either bio-father or father figure (including paramour).
- b) Race of perpetrator.
- c) Income - either by supplement or employment.
- d) Sexual act of perpetrator - six possible activities divided by non-body penetration and body penetration; body penetration assumed to be more serious as judged by panel of abuse specialists.
- e) Highest educational level achieved by perpetrator - this will indicate accomplished not just attempted.
- f) Self-disclosure by perpetrator either post other disclosure, before any other disclosure or no disclosure.
- g) Age of perpetrator at disclosure.
- h) Parented during first three years child's life - refers to actual physical presence in the home only.

3. Description of Victim:

- a) Age. Age of victim at disclosure of most recent abuse.
- b) Sex.
- c) Race.
- d) Living arrangement at disclosure - indicates a residence in which the victim had resided for more than one week prior to disclosure.

- e) Ordinal position - demonstrates where victim was in the sibling order, as well as whether or not multiple sibs were involved. If multiple sibs were involved each is dealt with fully as an individual victim except in this category.
- f) Related injury to most recent incident:
 - a) Sexual - refers to whether injuries were received as a result of sexual abuse;
 - b) Physical - refers to whether injuries were received as a result of physical abuse.
 - c) Self-abuse - self-inflicted physical injury presumed to be post abuse symptom.
- g) Duration of relationship between perpetrator and victim.
- h) Sexual act(s) victim caused to perform to perpetrator.

4. **Situational Factors Contributing to Sexual Abuse** - through the literative review, several possible contributing factors were cited, usually specific to the perpetrator, the victim, the non-perpetrating parent and environmental:

- a) Non-Perpetrating Parent:
 - 1) Unaware - indicates the mother's lack of knowledge of the abusive incident.
 - 2) Refused to Believe - informed or had knowledge of an alleged sexual abuse between their mate and their child without acknowledging it at any level.
 - 3) Refused to Report - informed of abuse and believed, but did not report.
 - 4) Passive encouragement - evidence of subtle encouragement of the abuse but not participating.
 - 5) Active encouragement - overt encouragement including participation.
 - 6) Feared perpetrator - afraid of perpetrator threatened but not abused physically.
 - 7) Abused by perpetrator - physical or sexual abuse by the perpetrator.
 - 8) Previous sexual abuse victim - as a child.
 - 9) Chronic mental or physical illness - regular and debilitating to point of upset to normal life

pattern.

- 10) Often absent - refers to regular absence from home leaving perpetrator unhindered access (for example shift work).

b) The Victim:

- 1) Provocative behaviour - evidence of learned sexuality demonstrated by pseudo-mature sexualized behaviours, age inappropriate sexual overtures (verbal and physical), and activities, corroborated by investigating social workers, physicians or significant other(s).
- 2) Received gifts - bribed with material goods or money to participate in abuse.
- 3) Physical threats - threatened but not physically abused.
- 4) Physically abused - in conjunction with presence of sexual abuse.
- 5) Emotional duress - use of emotional bribery such as family breakup; removal of child etc. to gain compliance.
- 6) Previous sexual abuse by other perpetrator - refers to sexual abuse by any other including family and non-family members.

c) The Perpetrator:

- 1) Alcohol/Drug Abuse - identified as problem by perpetrator, family or outside agency assessment.
- 2) Emotional disturbance - identified by professional assessment.
- 3) Pedophile history - Abuse of other than current victim - identified by criminal record, abuse registry or self-admission of perpetrator.
- 4) Incest history Abuse of other biologically related child than current victim - identified by criminal record, abuse registry, self-admission or family disclosure.
- 5) Physically coercive - identifies perpetrator who uses physical threats and actions routinely in family and/or in community.

- 6) Tyrannical personality - identifies perpetrator who is self and/or family described as dictatorial and oppressive in controlling the family.
 - 7) Abuse victim - whether the perpetrator was ever a physical or sexual abuse victim.
 - 8) Passive personality - identifies perpetrator who is self and/or family described as unassuming and non-violent in the family and/or community.
- d) Environmental:
- 1) Insufficient accommodation - identifies family situation in which sleeping arrangements by necessity may have been inappropriate.
 - 2) Social isolation - identifies as socially detached family including limited community and social contact.
 - 3) Geographic isolation - identifies a family geographically removed or isolated.
 - 4) Extended family isolation - identifies a family detached by distance or other reason from extended family contact.
 - 5) Current situational crisis - identifies individual or family crisis which is not on-going such as death, recent unemployment.
 - 6) Economic difficulties - refers to on-going economic difficulties or subsistence living.
 - 7) Multi-problem family - refers to families which are experiencing on-going difficulty in many areas of living as a whole or individual members simultaneously.

If there is inadequate file information found to complete the questionnaire this will be recorded. As well, whether the primary intake form the "Multi-Service Reporting System Intake Record" was completed in the file. The latter of these two information pieces will be used administratively by Thunder Bay Family and Children's Services and will not be

reported in the findings of this research.

c) Instrument Validity

As previously reported, the variables included in the final data collection instrument were developed as a result of an extensive literature review and the recommendation of a panel of social workers who are expert in child abuse investigations. It was necessary to develop an instrument unique to this research as no previous data collection instrument of this type has been developed for research in this particular area. However, the format and much of the content was gleaned from existing studies available in the literature (Pierce and Pierce 1985, Russell 1984, Phelan 1986, Mian et al 1986). (Data collection instrument Appendix C). The data collection instrument and process were pretested during development twice, each time using three files. Data sources within the files were: 1) the Multi-Service Reporting System - Service Intake Record (Appendix D); 2) the Report to Child Abuse Register and Follow-Up Report to Child Abuse Register (Appendix E); 3) Case Note entries (Appendix F); 4) Worker Summaries (Appendix G); and 5) Court Documents (Appendix H). The Operational definitions used in this data collection coincided with the definitions used for day to day data collection in the files. This was confirmed by the panel of Agency Social Workers who assisted in the questionnaire development. In both pretests sufficient information was found in all six files. Provision is made on the data collection instrument to note insufficient information. Files with insufficient information

will be withheld from the large study. Insufficient for this study is defined by a lack of information available or collected which would substantiate the abuse at any level. All unsubstantiated files were withheld from the study.

d) Inter-Rater Reliability

It was anticipated that inter-rater reliability would be a problem in the collection of this data. Ten recorders were used to collect data on ninety (90) victims. The average length of employment at Family and Children's Services of the District of Thunder Bay was 5.6 years indicating a high level of awareness with the recording documents, procedures and file content expectations. Three of the recorders were actively involved in the development of the data collection instrument. Prior to data collection, all researchers were instructed as a group on the use of the data collection instrument. The operational definitions of the variables were clearly explained including the expected location of the variables in the file. Recorders were instructed to adhere rigorously to the operational definitions given. All data was collected simultaneously in one central location under the supervision of this author. When a recorder ran into a problem, a meeting was held to discuss the problem between all recorders. Decisions were reached by consensus in the group. Even though the recorders read each file fully, incomplete recording posed a problem; if the recorder could not locate the information the section was left blank or marked unknown. Recorders were strictly instructed not to guess but only to record

what was recorded in the file. Throughout the data collection, ten files selected randomly were re-checked by this author to monitor completeness of the data collection, inter-rater reliability and instrument reliability.

e) **Limitations:**

Reviews of secondary sources of information have both great potential and typical problems. Having an understanding of the limitations of this research design is necessary to plan for and understand the impact these limitations can have.

First, secondary sources are not always put together with a research problem in mind. The data collection instrument in this research has been constructed to collect information which, according to agency policy, procedure and practice should be in the file; thereby turning unassembled data into systematically assembled data specific to this research.

Second, descriptive studies of secondary source information are historical and can arguably have a limited projective or predictive use, unless the weight of the evidence is significant enough to make predictive assumptions that the future will be like the past (Tripodi 1983).

Third, there are no controls for extraneous effects of either the event being recorded or the actual recording of the event. Similarly, secondary sources are subject to recorder bias through inadequate recording or over recording and the knowledge that the document is to be saved or scrutinized by others. Additionally, recorded information can be biased because it is

function specific, such as a court document. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate as many sources of information as are accessible to glean all available information.

Use of secondary source data relies heavily on the "weight of evidence" to make predictions and control for information validity and recorded consistency and bias. Within this study measures of frequency and cross group comparisons will be the primary mode of comparison.

f) Generalizability

Given the fundamental limitations of descriptive research the generalizability of the findings is unquestionably suspect. It is not the intention of this research to argue that the findings found herein have validity beyond the scope of this research. Nor is it the intention of this research to presume that the observations found vis a vis the hypothesis put forward are the sole explanations. Given the rudimentary methodology of this research, combined with the fundamental limitations of descriptive research no proclamations of causal relationships can be made. The ultimate goal of research is to build theory through to the resolution of causal relationships. The building process involves the use of research designs in which the objective is to clarify the research problem and prepare for higher level research. The purpose of this research is to function as such a primer for future research of a more sophisticated nature. This research will be content with answering the question; is there any purpose in studying this phenomena at a level beyond a descriptive

research design?

IV SAMPLE GROUP:

a) Sample & Sampling

Only referrals made to the Thunder Bay Family and Children's Services during the period January 1, 1985 to August 29, 1989 were examined in this research. The primary rationale was that the Thunder Bay Family and Children's Services instituted at January 1, 1985 a new Intake Record System making data retrieval more accessible. Additionally, the number of referrals in this period are sufficient enough for the purposes of a descriptive research approach. Only files opened for service and investigated by the agency were considered. No Brief Service activations were included in this sample selection (Brief Service is service requiring less than one hour of agency service or intervention). This eliminated non-abuse and crank referrals.

The most significant characteristic about this sample is that it is a specific sample whereby only files in which a biological or step-father (including live-in paramour) is the alleged perpetrator were examined. This created some file retrieval difficulties in that files were not coded perpetrator specific. The final sample was drawn manually from all files open for sexual abuse investigations by all perpetrators during the calendar years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 to August 29. This list was presented to the Child Abuse Unit who identified through recollection of names, ninety (90) investigations in which the

perpetrator was either a biological father or step-father. Although this method was not entirely satisfactory in that undoubtedly some investigations may have been overlooked, no other options were available. After consultation with the Agency Statistician and Senior Management, it was decided the sample I had would be the best I could get under the circumstances. Every effort was made to locate all sexual abuse files open from 1985 through August 1989, which were then inspected and the perpetrator established. Through this process this author is reasonably sure no files were missed. If files were missed it is the opinion of this author and the Agency Statistician that only a very limited number could have been missed.

The ninety (90) files found represented one hundred (100) victims; forty-seven (47) step-children and forty-three (43) bio-children. There were six (6) unsubstantiated step-father abuses and eleven (11) unsubstantiated bio-fathers. This left a total of sixty-four (64) offenders, 37 step-fathers and 27 bio-fathers, covering forty (40) step-father victims and thirty-three (33) bio-father victims for a total of seventy-three (73) victims.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

I INTRODUCTION:

This research began with the central hypothesis that if treated as discrete entities and compared by their characteristics that there would be systematic and identifiable differences between biological fathers and step-fathers who sexually abuse their daughters.

The dissemination of the findings will follow the conceptual framework as established at the onset of this study. Each element and sub-element of the pre-abuse and abuse phases will be examined individually with a summary discussion including questions for future research concluding.

II PRE-ABUSE PHASE

a) Motivation

It is argued here, that a fundamental ingredient necessary for a sexual abuse to occur is perpetrator motivation. This research considered four possible motivations; they are 1) pedophilia, 2) control, 3) courtship, 4) individual pathology. Each was examined independently, this is not to imply exclusivity, simply to establish base line characteristics on which to compare bio and step-abusers. It is important to again emphasize that elements of all four of these motivations may exist in any perpetrator. Our examination is limited to a study of them independently.

i) Pedophilia

Pedophilia is one possible motivation which previous research had postulated as a possible difference between bio and step-fathers (Russell 1984). The suggestion has been made that step-fathers may be "disguised" pedophiliacs who marry or move into a child available situation.

This research found no indication of this, based on; known previous incest or pedophile involvements with victims other than the most recent victim.

INCEST/PEDOPHILE HISTORY

TABLE 1	STEP-FATHERS N-29		BIO-FATHERS N-26	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
Pedophile History	3	10.3%	3	11.5%
Incest History	2	6.8%	4	15.3%
Combined	5	17.2%	7	26.9%
Nothing Known	8/37	21.6%	1/27	3.7%

As demonstrated in Table 1 bio-fathers in this study were more likely to have been involved in a previous sexual abuse of a child. In this study, 21.8% of all offenders had previously abused another child victim. In this regard, 26.9% of bio-fathers had a history of child sexual abuse compared with 17.2% of step-fathers. Some of this difference can be accounted for by the fact that bio-fathers abused more multiple siblings than did step-fathers.

Step-fathers appear less inclined towards intra-familial pedophilia than are their bio-counterparts. Whether or not pedophilia was a motivator in any of the abusers in this study is very difficult to say. What we know is that nearly 22% of the perpetrators had previously abused another child. This is not an insignificant number and is clearly worth further investigation at a level of sophistication not available in a file survey.

ii) Control

The literature review identified perpetrator needs for control as a primary motivator (control defined as power or dominance over the family constituents). With one exception, no differences were identified in the literature relative to either offender population. The one exception was, that for step-fathers sexual abuse may be a rapid means of establishing control.

DURATION OF RELATIONSHIP BEFORE ABUSE ONSET

TABLE 2 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHERS N-40		BIO-FATHERS N-33	
	#	%	#	%
< 1 year	4	10%	0	0%
1 - 2 years	7	17.5%	1	3%
2 - 3 years	5	12.5%	2	6%
3 - 4 years	2	5%	0	0%
4 - 5 years	1	2.5%	6	18%
5 + years	6	15%	16	48%
Unknown	15	37.5%	8	24%

As demonstrated in Table 2, step-fathers typically had a shorter relationship with their victim prior to onset, 27.5%

knew the victim less than two years. However, 35% knew the victim in excess of two years. Specific to step-fathers the speculation that rapid onset might indicate control as a motivation seems dubious given the findings in this study. Although 10% initiated the abuse within the first year, many more, 35%, were initiated after one year. Although "rapid" was not defined in any study, it would seem likely that abuse initiated after one year of relationship, wouldn't be defined as rapid onset, for the purpose of establishing control.

A second comparison needs to be made vis-a-vis the function of power in the sexual abuse relationship. It was speculated that for both step and bio-fathers the sexual abuse may be an affirmation of their need for power and control. As a substantiation of this, one would expect to find a high rate of co-related physical and sexual abuse. Evident in Table 3 is the fact that in this research, bio-fathers overwhelmingly were more physically abusive to the victim than step-fathers. The Non-Perpetrating parent in the bio-family was also more likely to be physically abused and more often feared the bio-father perpetrator (Table 4).

PRESENCE OF PHYSICAL THREATS AND PHYSICAL ABUSE

TABLE 3 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N 32/40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N 26/33	
	#	%	#	%
Physical Threats	4	12.5%	11	42.3%
Physically Abused	4	12.5%	11	42.3%
Nothing Known	8/40	20%	7/33	21.2%

ABUSE TO NON-PERPETRATING PARENT

TABLE 4	STEP-FATHER N-37		BIO-FATHER N-27	
	#	%	#	%
Feared Perpetrator	7	18.9%	10	37%
Abused By Perpetrator	5	13.5%	5	18.5%

If the sexual abuse is a function of power in the family, it was hypothesized that the abuser would be more often characterized as a tyrant within his family. In this study; 44.8% of the step-fathers were described as tyrannical (Table 5) even though they were less likely to be physically abusive. In contrast, bio-fathers were less often described as tyrannical (38.4%) and were more often physically abusive. Step-fathers, also evident in Table 5, are described as physically coercive in 41.3% of the sample. In this study, physically coercive identifies a perpetrator who routinely uses physical threats and actions in the family and/or the community. Interestingly, these same step-fathers were less likely to be physically abusive to the victim and/or their mates. In this regard, it is possible that the sexual abuse was the "power play" in these families. If the sexual abuse was intended to demonstrate dominance. It is expected the victim would be more often caused to perform a sexual act to the perpetrator. As evident in Table 6, step-fathers caused less of their victims to perform sexual acts than did bio-fathers. As well, bio-fathers caused more victims to perform the more demeaning acts; 21% of bio-fathers caused their victim to

perform oral sex as compared to 12.5% of the step-father sample.

TYRANT BEHAVIOUR

TABLE 5	STEP-FATHERS N-29		BIO-FATHERS N-26	
	#	%	#	%
Tyrannical Personality	13	44.8%	10	38.4%
Physically Coercive	12	41.3%	11	42.3%
Passive Personality	4	13.7%	5	19.2%
Nothing Known	8/37	21.6%	1/26	3.7%

SEXUAL ACTS VICTIM CAUSED TO PERFORM TO PERPETRATOR

TABLE 6	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-33	
	#	%	#	%
None	20	50%	13	39%
Exhibitionism	0	0%	1	3%
Fondling/Kissing	8	20%	4	12%
Masturbation	1	2.5%	0	0%
Oral Intercourse	5	12.5%	7	21%
Anal Manipulation	0	0%	0	0%
Other	0	0%	1	3%
Unknown	6	15%	7	21%

Lastly, relative to power and dominance, step-fathers' and bio-fathers' use of emotional bribery and duress, is

relatively equivalent. In Table 7, we can see step-fathers used emotional bribery to enlist victim compliance with 56.2% of their victims; bio-fathers used emotional bribery with 61.5% of their victims. Although this is evidently a power play, it is not disproportionately more predominant in either step-families or bio-families.

EMOTIONAL DURESS

TABLE 7	STEP-VICTIMS N-32		BIO-VICTIMS N-26	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
Emotional Duress	18	56.2%	16	61.5%
Nothing Known	8/40	20%	7/33	21.2%

Although sexual abuse may well be a "power play" by step-fathers; in this step-father sample, the power play was not supported by other domineering activities to the same extent as it was in biological families. Step-fathers physically abused less often, sexually abused at less serious levels, and caused their victims to perform less sexual acts to them than did their bio-counterparts. Additionally, they used emotional bribery to a slightly lesser extent than did bio-fathers.

With regard to control as a motivator, we know bio-fathers were more feared by their spouses and more often abused them. They more often physically abused their victims and they sexually abused at more serious levels. If we accept these behavioural indicators as demonstrative of a desire for control,

than bio-fathers through comparison are more likely to have control as a motivation than their step counter-parts.

iii Courtship

Throughout the research (Summitt 1978, Dawson 1982, and Finklehor 1984) sexual attraction/gratification is identified as a possible motivator. Once again, the characteristics of the abuse are our best measure of this phenomena. In this regard, we will use the indicators of victim age, sexual activity and severity and victim compliance.

One would expect that in a courtship the age of the victim would necessarily have to be conducive to a courtship fantasy. As seen in Table 8 32.5% of step-father victims were below age 11 compared to 57% of bio-victims. Conversely, 65% of the step-victims were age 12 and above compared to 42% of the bio-victims.

AGE OF VICTIM AT DISCLOSURE

TABLE 8 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-33	
	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	0	0%	4	12%
4 - 7	4	10%	7	21%
8 - 11	9	22.5%	8	24%
12 - 15	21	52.5%	13	39%
16 +	5	12.5%	1	3%
Unknown	1	2.5%	0	0%

Moving beyond age, one further expectation relative to courtship would be that the sexual activity would be less severe. As demonstrated in Table 9, fondling was most often, the most serious sexual activity (51.3%) for step-fathers. Bio-fathers single most serious act, was likely to be vaginal intercourse (44.4%). Additionally, we know from Table 6 fondling was the most often performed sexual act of step-victims (20%). Oral intercourse was the most often performed sexual act of bio-victims (21%).

SINGLE MOST SERIOUS ACT -- MULTIPLE AND SINGULAR

TABLE 9	STEP-FATHER N-37		BIO-FATHER N-27	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
Anal Intercourse	2	5.4%	1	3.7%
Vaginal Intercourse	10	27%	12	44.4%
Masturbation	1	2.7%	1	3.7%
Digital Penetration	4	10.8%	3	11.1%
Oral Intercourse	2	5.4%	3	11.1%
Fondling	19	51.3%	6	22.2%
Exhibitionism	0	0%	1	3.7%
Other	0	0%	1	3.7% Urinated on Child
Multiple Acts	16 (Average 2 Acts)	43.2%	16 (Average 3 Acts)	59.2%

Also, as evident in Table 10, we can see that not only did more bio-fathers engage in full vaginal intercourse, but that also the age of their victim was younger than step-victims who were also involved in vaginal intercourse.

VAGINAL INTERCOURSE BY AGE OF VICTIM AT DISCLOSURE

TABLE 10 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHERS N-9/37 VICTIMS N-10		BIO-FATHERS N-12/27 VICTIMS N-13	
	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	0	0%	2	15.3%
4 - 7	2	20%	3	23.7%
8 - 11	1	10%	2	15.3%
12 - 15	4	40%	5	38.4%
16 +	3	30%	1	7.6%

Using penis-body entry as a benchmark for measuring severity, 48% of bio-fathers engaged in full vaginal and anal intercourse, 32.4% of step-fathers engaged in anal and/or vaginal intercourse (Table 9 and Table 10). Bio-fathers caused 21% of their victims to perform fellatio, compared to 12.5% of step-father victims (Table 6). As shown in Table 9, bio-fathers were more likely to abuse with multiple acts; with on average three (3) acts per multiple perpetrator. Lastly, bio-fathers as seen in Table 3 and Table 10, abused younger age children at a more serious level, 52% of the bio-fathers abused via anal intercourse, vaginal intercourse or receipt of fellatio, compared with 32.5% of the step-fathers. Of the bio-father penal-body abuses, 36% were

perpetrated to a population under age 7.

By using the measure of penis-body entry as benchmark of severity, the evidence in this study would suggest bio-fathers abuse at the more severe levels.

Lastly, relative to courtship, it was anticipated that victim compliance would have been attained and maintained in accordance with a courtship ritual. This would include the receipt of gifts or favoured status and that it would not include physical abuse or physical threats.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS: VICTIMS

TABLE 11	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-32		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-26	
	#	%	#	%
Provocative	5	15.6%	5	19.2%
Received Gifts	5	15.6%	5	19.2%
Physical Threats	4	12.5%	11	42.3%
Emotional Duress	18	56.2%	16	61.5%
Previous Sexual Abuse	7	21.8%	0	0
Physically Abused	4	12.5%	11	42.3%
Nothing Known	8 of 40 =	20%	7 of 33 =	21.2%

As seen in Table 11 both victim populations were equally enticed by the receipt of gifts. However, relative to threatened and actual physical abuse we can see bio-fathers threatened 42.3% of their victims as compared to 12.5% of the step-victims. Interestingly, the numbers are the same with regard to actual

physical abuse.

Relative to courtship one other observation emerged. As shown in Table 11 we can see that 21.8% of the step-victims had been previously sexually abused. It is argued in the literature (Perlmutter 1982) that there is a heightened sexual atmosphere in a "step-home" particularly if pubescent daughters are present. Additionally, many researchers have observed learned sexual behaviour, characterized as sexually provocative in abuse victims (Mian et al 1986, Goodwin 1982, Summitt and Kryso 1978, Finklehor 1984, Herman 1981, Fuller 1981). The suggestion has been made that learned sexuality plays a role in sequential victimization by multiple offenders.

Evidence of learned sexuality in step-victims may indicate previous disclosed or undisclosed sexual abuse. The presence of learned sexual behaviour could act in a step-family to enhance the probability of a step-father sexually abusing the "sexualized" step-daughter. Provocative behaviour, is defined in this study as pseudo-mature sexualized behaviour(s) and/or age inappropriate sexual overtures and activities (verbal and physical) corroborated by investigating Social Workers, Physicians or significant others.

As seen in Table 11, 15.6% of the step-victims demonstrated provocative behaviour indicative of learned sexuality; however, so did 19.2% of the bio-victims. Indicators such as sexual comments to teachers, highly sexualized play with dolls and age inappropriate sexual activity between the victim and

the victim's friends were recorded in the files. Unfortunately, only one agency form, the "Follow-Up Report to the Child Abuse Registry" requests information on provocative behaviour. Due to changing Agency Policy, this form has never been consistently recorded. Therefore, any information about provocative behaviour was generally found in the summary recordings. If sexualized behaviour or activities are known of they are recorded, unfortunately, the reliability of this is uncertain. With this in mind, evidence of learned sexual behaviour in the victims was found in 13.6% of the total victim population ranging in age from 4 upward, with the age group 12 - 15 most often identified.

Of interest is that 17.5% of the step-victims were previously sexually abused by another perpetrator. Although both victim populations demonstrated provocative behaviours, it maybe, that there is a connection between learned sexuality and subsequent victimizations. Clearly, further investigation is needed as to what role learned sexuality plays in the process of on-going victimization.

d) Individual Pathology

The last motivation examined was individual pathology. Research has revealed alcohol abuse and disturbed childhoods, including being abused, appear frequently in perpetrator populations. Less frequently appearing, but also observed is an emotional disturbance or psychopathology in the perpetrator.

As seen in Table 12, the perpetrators in this study are no different then those in other research; 41.8% of all offenders

in this study were described by themselves, their family or by professional assessment as having problems with alcohol. Interestingly, drugs were not often abused by these perpetrators with only 10.6% described as a drug abuser. Both perpetrator populations were equally likely to have problems with alcohol and or drugs.

Relative to disturbed childhoods, also evident in Table 12, 13.7% of step-fathers were victims of abuse in their childhood as compared to 19.2% of bio-fathers. This was not necessarily a self report, however, nearly 20% of the bio-fathers were evidently abuse victims. If directly asked about their childhood, their perceptions of disturbed or not may be different. This should be further explored in future research.

Last, relative to emotional disturbance, 27.5% of the step-fathers and 19.2% of the bio-fathers had been professionally assessed as having an emotional disturbance at a level significant enough to disturb normal life patterns. The limitations of a file survey are such that the level or type of disturbance was not always recorded. File information may have been as limited as perpetrator acknowledgement of psychiatric hospital admission or ongoing psychological or psychiatric treatment. In excess of one quarter of the step-perpetrators (23.6% of all perpetrators) are identified as having an emotional disturbance. This is not an insignificant number and certainly bears further investigation.

Of the three individual pathology's examined, alcohol abuse was the most problematic for both populations. There was no

indication for the majority of both populations in this study, of either emotional disturbance, or of them having had disturbed childhoods. Alcohol may well have worked as a disinhibitor, promoting the likelihood of abuse, this again is worth further consideration.

For the majority of both perpetrator populations individual pathology does not appear to be a motivator.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS: PERPETRATOR

TABLE 12	STEP-FATHERS N-29		BIO-FATHERS N-26	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
Drug Abuse	3	10.3%	3	11.5%
Alcohol Abuser	12	41.3%	11	42.3%
Emotional Disturbance	8	27.5%	5	19.2%
Pedophile History	3	10.3%	3	11.5%
Incest History	2	6.8%	4	13.7%
Physically Coercive	12	41.3%	11	42.3%
Tyrannical Personality	13	44.8%	10	38.4%
Abuse Victim	4	13.7%	5	19.2%
Passive Personality	4	13.7%	5	19.2%
Nothing Known	8/37	21.6%	1/27	3.7%

v) Summary

As earlier suggested, given the limitations of a file survey, its difficult to know with certainty what motivated individual perpetrators. Further, it is important to recognize that multiple motives may have existed simultaneously. This does not, however, minimize the relevance of the observations of this

study, particularly as they relate to areas for further research.

In the areas examined, pedophilia, control, courtship and individual pathology a few interesting observations were made. Specific to pedophilia; this research found no evidence to support Russells (1984) suggestion that some step-fathers may be disguised pedophiliacs who marry into child available situations. In fact, step-fathers were less likely then bio-fathers to have previously sexually abused another child.

RANKED SITUATIONAL FACTORS: PERPETRATORS

TABLE 13					
STEP-FATHERS N-29			BIO-FATHERS N-26		
RANK	FACTOR	%	RANK	FACTOR	%
1	Tyrannical Personality	44.8%	1	Physically Coercive	42.3%
2	Alcohol Abuser	41.3%	2	Alcohol Abuser	42.3%
3	Physically Coercive	41.3%	3	Tyrannical Personality	38.4%
4	Emotional Disturbance	27.5%	4	Emotional Disturbance	19.2%
5	Abuse Victim	13.7%	5	Abuse Victim	19.2%
6	Passive Personality	13.7%	6	Passive Personality	19.2%
7	Pedophile History	10.3%	7	Incest History	13.7%
8	Drug Abuser	10.3%	8	Pedophile History	11.5%
9	Incest History	6.8%	9	Drug Abuser	11.5%

With regard to control this study revealed bio-fathers to be more feared, more often physically abused their spouses and victims and, they more often sexually abused at more severe levels. Using these indicators, it appears as though more bio-fathers may have had dominance needs and control as a motivation to sexually abuse. In these families it appears as though the sexual abuse was just one aspect of a multi-abusive situation perpetrated by the father.

Earlier, alcohol abuse was recognized as the one individual pathology that appeared to be predominant in the abuse cases examined in this research. Alcohol abuse alone, would not necessarily be the primary motivator. It would more likely function as a disinhibitor allowing what other motivation existed to be more compelling. Individual pathology did not present in either population as a likely candidate to be a primary motivator of sexual abuse. This said, however, issues for further research were raised, particularly in reference to emotional disturbance.

Through the examination of courtship indicators; victim age, severity of abuse and compliance methods, it appears that step-fathers may well be more inclined to have courtship as a motivation.

Bio-fathers abused young victims more seriously, caused the victim to perform the more demeaning sexual acts and were often physically abusive. Seemingly uncharacteristic of what would be a courtship motivation.

For the majority of step-fathers, the most serious

sexual act was their fondling of a victim probably aged 12 - 15, they caused few victims to perform sexual acts and were less likely to be physically abusive. Perlmutter et al (1982) argue that there is a heightened sexual atmosphere in the step home, particularly in the presence of a pubescent step-daughter. They conclude "In our work with REM [step] families, we have seen that the responses to the loosening of sexual boundaries have run the gamut from pleasurable fantasies, increased anxiety, repressed thoughts and distancing behaviour, angry and violent fighting as a defence against sexual stirrings, to the most extreme and unfortunate circumstance of a sexual relationship between step-parent and step-child." (p. 84). The point to this, is that although there is inherent pathology in intra-familial adult/child sex, it may be less than in incestuous bio-families. For the step-father, the abuse may be more "sexual"; "a step-father may see his step-daughter as a desirable and available female, define the relationship as a love affair and act in accordance with the conventional notions about what an affair involves (courtship, persuasion, etc.)." (Phelan 1986, p. 537). The bio-father on the other hand, may be expressing dominance, power, authority and ownership over his family. The frequency of co-associated physical abusiveness and greater abuse of multiple victims found in this study would tend to support this notion.

Should this suspicion be true, that being that sexual abuse for many step-fathers may be more sexual in etiology than power and control oriented as appears to be the case in bio-

abusers, the implications for reconstitution are tremendous. Server & Janzen (1982) have found the more troubled the family the less likely they can be successfully reconstituted. Although, in this study both family types were frequently multi-problem the critical factor for reconstitution is change in the offender. If as suspected here, the bio-abuser is the more pathological, then significant change may be less likely. In this regard, we can move beyond reconstitution and even question the prudence of unsupervised access to the child past disclosure.

b) Opportunity

Opportunity, defined as unhampered access to a victim is the second primary element of the pre-abuse phase. It is suggested here, that maintaining opportunities to abuse is synonymous with maintaining the abuse. In this regard, the non-offending spouse and the victim play predominant roles. Simply, if we expect disclosure would end the abuse, why would either the non-offending spouse or the victim not make the disclosure. Moving beyond this, for the purposes of this study, are reasons for non-disclosure different relative to the two offender populations under study here.

i) Non-Perpetrating Parent

Through an examination of the non-perpetrating parents (Table 14) we can see that if collusion in anyway existed in any of the families, it more likely existed in step-families. In this study, 48.6% of the step-father mates refused to believe, defined in this study as having knowledge of an alleged sexual abuse

between their mate and their child without acting on this knowledge at any level to confirm or not that abuse was occurring. Similarly, 32.5% of the "step-mates" refused to report the abuse which in this study is defined as knowing and believing that an abuse occurred, but not reporting it to any authority. These figures are contrasted by much lower figures for "bio-mates", 29.6% of the bio-mates refused to believe and 14.8% believed, but refused to report. As seen in Table 14, the majority of bio-mates claimed to be unaware of any abuse. However, 25.9% of the bio-mates demonstrated behaviours or lifestyles which made possible the sexual abuse. We can see also in Table 14, 40.7% of these bio-mates were often absent from the home compared to 21.6% of the step-mates. Additionally, slightly more bio-mates were reported to be chronically ill, 14.8% compared to 10.8% for step-mates. Both of these factors are supported in the literature (Sgori 1982, Dawson 1982, Finklehor 1984) as causative factors contributing to sexual abuse. The degree of the "mates" complicity is difficult to assess with data available in this study. Finklehor (1984) contests through his research that they have not seen an innocent mother in long standing abuse. Demonstrated in Table 15 we see the largest number of abuse relationships are in excess of two years for both bio and step-father abusers.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS: NON-PERPETRATING MATE

TABLE 14 VARIABLE	"STEP-MATES" N-37		"BIO-MATES" N-27	
	#	%	#	%
Unaware	18	48.6%	12	44.4%
Refused to Believe	18	48.6%	8	29.6%
Refused to Report	12	32.5%	4	14.8%
Passive Encouragement	7	18.9%	7	25.9%
Active Encouragement	1	2.7%	2	7.4%
Often Absent	8	21.6%	11	40.7%
Chronically Ill	4	10.8%	4	14.8%
Nothing Known	2	5.4%	1	3.7%

**DURATION BETWEEN FIRST OFFENCE AND DISCLOSURE BY CURRENT
PERPETRATOR**

TABLE 15 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N - 40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N - 33	
	#	%	#	%
< 1 week	4	10%	7	21%
< 1 month	6	15%	1	3%
< 6 months	5	12.5%	3	9%
6 - 12 months	7	17.5%	4	12%
12 - 24 months	4	10%	1	3%
24 + months	13	32.5%	12	36%
Unknown	1	2.5%	5	15%

The majority of these mothers may be genuinely unaware and coincidentally make situations in the home more conducive to sexual abuse. There is some evidence in Table 16 that some bio--mothers do take quick initial action; whereby 33.3% of the bio-

father abusers referred by the nuclear family were disclosed in less than one week of occurrence. What is more evident, however, is that only 6 of 33 abuses by a bio-father and 2 of 40 abuses by a step-father were disclosed by the nuclear family.

There were some differences between bio-mates and step-mates in this study, there were also many similarities. The majority of both claimed they were unaware of the abuse, 48.6% of step-mates and 44.4% of bio-mates (Table 17). Equal numbers feared the perpetrator and relatively equal numbers were abused by the perpetrator. Also, equal numbers had themselves been sexually abused, 21.8% of the total sample

DURATION OF ABUSE RELATIONSHIP BY NUCLEAR FAMILY DISCLOSURE

TABLE 16	STEP-FATHER N-2-/40 5%		BIO-FATHER N-6-/33 18%	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
1 week	0	0%	2	33.3%
1 month	0	0%	0	0%
6 months	2	100%	0	0%
6 - 12 months	0	0%	3	50%
12 - 24 months	0	0%	0	0%
24 + months	0	0%	1	16.6%

were sexual abuse victims. Equal amounts of step and bio-mates suffered from a debilitating chronic physical or mental illness.

The differences found were quite interesting. More step-mates refused to believe and refused to report then did bio-

mates. Significantly, 32.5% of the step-mates knew of the abuse and did not report it compared to 14.8% of the bio-mates. One would expect fear of the perpetrator would be the cause of not reporting. However, more bio-mates (37%) feared their spouse than did step-mates (18.9%) and slightly more bio-mates were abused; 18.5% compared to 13.5% step-mates. Also of interest is the observation that step-mates were less often absent from the home; this seems consistent with higher numbers of step-mates being aware of the abuse. Bio-mates were described as often absent in 40.7% of the sample. Whether there is encouragement by omission in either of these families is difficult to say. Certainly, step-mates in this study did less to stop abuses that they knew about.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS: NON-PERPETRATING PARENT

TABLE 17 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER MATE N - 37		BIO-FATHER MATE N - 27	
	#	%	#	%
Refused to Believe	18	48.6%	8	29.6%
Refusal to Report	12	32.5%	4	14.8%
Passive Encouragement	7	18.9%	7	25.9%
Active Encouragement	1	2.7%	2	7.4%
Feared Perpetrator	7	18.9%	10	37%
Abused by Perpetrator	5	13.5%	5	18.5%
Sexual Abuse Victim	8	21.6%	6	22.2%
Chronic Illness	4	10.8%	4	14.8%
Unaware	18	48.6%	12	44.4%
Often Absent	8	21.6%	11	40.7%
Nothing Known	2	5.4%	1	3.7%

In summary, step-mates refused to report more often than bio-mates; further, only 5% of the step-father abuses were reported by the nuclear family as compared to 18% for the bio-father abuses. Although there is some evidence of greater passive encouragement by the bio-mate the factor of coincidence cannot be discounted. Interestingly, more step-mates knew of alleged or actual abuse and did not act on this knowledge through disclosure to outside authorities. Relatively equal number of step and bio-mates were alleged to have passively or actively encouraged the abuse. Finally in regard to all mates, the largest numbers claimed to be totally unaware.

The finding that step-mates did less to stop the abuse once they had knowledge of it is the major distinction found in this study. Close to 50% are alleged to have had knowledge of the abuse. Definitely more research is required to understand this phenomena.

ii) The Daughters as Victims

Many differences were found between step-victims and bio-victims. First, we know step-victims are older (Table 8). We know bio-victims were more often physically abused and physically threatened (Table 3). Bio-victims were also more often caused to perform sexual acts to the perpetrator (Table 6). Also, we know step-victims are more likely to purposely disclose (Table 20). Additionally, we know bio-victims are abused at the most serious levels (Table 10). Lastly, we know more step-victims have been sexually abused by other perpetrators (Table 11).

In four areas there appeared to be no differences. Both victim populations were equally enticed by the receipt of gifts, both appeared to be learning sexualized or provocative behaviours, emotional duress was used equally by both types of perpetrator to enlist their daughters involvement (Table 11).

A somewhat surprising discovery was the number of victims of both bio and step-fathers who lived in families described as multi-problem. Of 44 families reported on, 34 of them or 71.2% were identified as multi-problem (Table 19). Slightly more step-families were experiencing economic difficulties than were bio-families. In all other areas these families are not markedly different from one another (Table 19). Interestingly, however, as indicated in the literature, victim isolation appears to play a role in the victimization

ORDINAL POSITION OF VICTIM

TABLE 18 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-33	
	#	%	#	%
Oldest	24	60%	21	63.6%
Second	14	35%	10	30%
Third	1	2.5%	2	6%
Fourth	0	0%	0	0%
Unknown	1	2.5%	0	0%
Multiple	3 - 8% of step-dads abused multiple siblings		6 - 22.2% of bio-dads abused multiple siblings	
	*3 of 14 second eldest were abused concurrent with the eldest		6 of 10 second eldest were abused concurrent with the eldest	

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

TABLE 19 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHERS N-24		BIO-FATHERS N-20	
	#	%	#	%
Insufficient Accommodation	4	16.6%	5	25%
Social Isolation	9	37.5%	7	35%
Extended Family Isolation	6	25%	5	25%
Current Situational Crisis	5	20.8%	5	25%
Economic Difficulties	9	37.5%	5	25%
Geographical Isolation	5	20.8%	2	10%
Multi-Problem Family	18	75%	16	80%
Nothing Known	13/37	35.1%	7/27	25.9%

process. In families where this information was available, social isolation was indicated in a third of the families and extended family isolation in one quarter. Geographic isolation played less a role, however, this is more a function of the urban setting in which cases were drawn from. Although the majority did not cite isolation as a family difficulty, significant numbers did, particularly in light of the fact that this type of information was not recorded in many of the family files examined in this study. I would argue that when one third of an urban victim population is described as socially isolated that this has played a role in ongoing victimization. Clearly, further research is required in this area.

Victim compliance, relative to the maintaining of abuse

opportunities, cannot be linked to a single factor, however, there do appear to be predominant themes in each of the victim categories. Bio-victims may have been more likely to comply out of legitimate fear of the perpetrator. How opportunity was maintained in step-families is less obvious. As we see in Table 15 the duration of the abuse is relatively equal in both family types. Although more step-victims made purposeful disclosures they did not do so more rapidly (Table 20).

DISCLOSURE TYPE

TABLE 20	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-33	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
Accidental	8	20%	13	40%
Purposeful	32	80%	20	60%

Given the earlier findings of this study, that step-mates did less to stop abuses they knew of, may indicate step-victim attempts to end the abuse early were frustrated to the point that they temporarily gave up; pursuing other avenues of disclosure at a later point. We know step-victims were, less severely sexually abused, less likely physically abused or threatened and not overly enticed by gifts or emotional bribery. Less accidental disclosures were made due to victim injury and 60% of step-disclosures were in excess of one year (Table 15). Based on this knowledge it appears frustrated disclosure may well be the

source of maintained opportunity in step-victim populations.

III DETERRENTS AND INHIBITIONS

Introduction

The second key element in the pre-abuse phase of the abuse sequence is deterrents and inhibitors. As a perpetrator progresses along the abuse sequence he must be motivated to abuse and have an opportunity to abuse. Following this he must overcome the social and psychological deterrents or inhibitions that exist to bridle intra-familial/inter-generational sexual activity.

In this regard, three deterrents were examined taboos, victim perpetrator attachment and the expectation of detection. Once again, the examination of these deterrents will be done individually. It must be understood that these deterrents may function simultaneously. An individual examination has been done here, to establish a baseline for comparison between offender populations.

a) Adult-Child Sexual Taboos

Through an examination of current literature, legislated responses, and examples of social opinion, this author has argued that the Incest Taboo and the Taboo against Adult/Child sex are not to be considered equal. It was suggested that the Incest Taboo is the "stronger" of the two taboos and hence would be seemingly more difficult to contravene. In this regard, it was expected that an examination of sexual abuse investigations done in a Child Protection Agency would produce a higher population of

step-father abusers. As was predicted, out of sixty four (64) offenders, thirty seven (37) were step-fathers and twenty seven (27) were biological fathers. Although at first glance, there does not appear to be a significant difference, bear in mind Russell's (1984) arguments about accessibility. The amount of step-father/daughter relationships in the general population is significantly less than bio-father/daughter relationships. Finding fifty eight percent (58) step-father abusers out of a mixed sample of step and bio-father abusers is actually quite a strong indicator that step-fathers are abusing more often. However, this is based on the assumption that these numbers are representative of accurate reporting rates. The only conclusion that we can draw here, is that based on reported incidences step-fathers are over-represented as the offender.

Whether or not heightened step-father incidence rates indicates a difference in the taboos is hard to say with certainty. Therefore, it was further hypothesized if the Child Sex Taboo is weaker than the Incest Taboo, we could expect to find on average a shorter relationship duration before the abuse onset in step-father abusers.

As demonstrated in Table 2, step-fathers typically had a short relationship with their victim prior to onset, 27.5% knew the victim less than two years prior to onset. Only 15% of the step-fathers knew the victim in excess of five years before abusing compared with 48% of the bio-fathers.

Combined incidence rates and a more rapid onset would

seem to infer the Incest Taboo is at work at some level preventing abuses, and to a certain extent delaying many that are perpetrated. However, it was further hypothesized that if the genetic deviance basis of the Incest Taboo was working we would see an avoidance of pro-creating sexual activity in biological fathers and a probable greater incidence in step-fathers.

As shown in Table 10, 44.4% of bio-fathers engaged in full vaginal intercourse compared to 24.3% of step-fathers. Interestingly though, 54.3% of the victims who were abused by a bio-father were aged 0 - 11, generally below the age of puberty and conception. Whereas 70% of the step-father victims were aged 12 and above in puberty and capable of conceiving.

Through the use of secondary source data, it is difficult to say with certainty what role the taboos play in restraining sexual abuse. Through the use of the three measures applied in this research, differences did exist between bio and step-offenders; assuming accurate reporting rates, more step-fathers sexually abuse, they begin abusing more rapidly and where vaginal intercourse was present they did not avoid procreating abuse with a victim capable of conception. Bio-fathers on the other hand apparently are less likely to be sexual abusers, being abusing after a longer relationship period with the victim and there is some evidence which may indicate they generally show an avoidance of procreating abuse.

As was established earlier in a file survey, there is no absolute measure of the influence, or lack of influence of either

taboos against sexual abuse. It must be remembered that the examination done here was done on a population of fathers who have broken one of two moral taboos. In these instances, the best the taboos could have done was to delay the abuse. In this regard, there is evidence of the Incest Taboo being the greater deterring taboo. The more critical test of taboo differences remains; are there no other explanations for increased step-father incidence rates, if not, the inference will be, that taboo difference is the major distinction. This question will be revisited following complete examination of the remaining variables.

b) Attachment

The primary hypothesis here, is that motivation to sexually abuse will be diminished by the presence of healthy asexual attachments between perpetrators and victims. The assumption is, that healthy attachments may be as much or more a deterrent to sexual abuse than are the taboos.

Since attachment is a process of developing a mutual relationship, proximity alone is not enough to ensure that attachment occurs. However, proximity is an essential ingredient. In this regard, it was hypothesized that: 1) step-fathers would have been less involved in the early child rearing of their victims; and 2) that step-fathers would have a shorter relationship with the victim prior to abuse, indicating a diminished opportunity for attachment to occur.

As shown in Table 2, step-fathers do have a shorter pre-abuse relationship with their victim. As Perlmutter et al (1982)

argue, the only tie step-related persons have is spatial, with a potential for emotional attachment to grow over time. Although step-fathers who abuse are living in close proximity to their victim they appear to have developed sexual rather than asexual relations with their victim.

As earlier hypothesized, step-fathers are less likely to be involved in early age bonding with their victim. In Table 21, only ten percent (10%) of the step-victims at disclosure were under the age of seven. Additionally Table 22 clearly shows that 85% of the step-father abusers in this study were not present in the first three years of the child's life. As would be expected, the majority of bio-fathers (97%) were present during the first three years. This of course begs the question, why was early age presence not a deterrent for these bio-fathers? Parker & Parker (1986) hypothesized active participation in nurturing not only presence in the child's life is the key

AGE OF VICTIM AT DISCLOSURE

TABLE 21	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-33	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	0	0%	4	12%
4 - 7	4	10%	7	21%
8 - 11	9	22.5%	8	24%
12 - 15	21	52.5%	13	39%
16 +	5	12.5%	1	3%
Unknown	1	2.5%	0	0%

PARENTED DURING FIRST THREE YEARS OF CHILD'S LIFE

TABLE 22 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-33	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	5	12.5%	32	97%
No	34	85%	1	3%
Unknown	1	2.5%	0	0%

ingredient. Through an examination of causative factors related to being abused. We can see that bio-fathers in this study used physical abuse and physical threats with 42.3% of their victims compared with only 12.5% of the step-father population (Table 3). We also know from Tables 3, 6 and 10 that bio-fathers were seriously sexually abusing a younger age victim than step-fathers. These elevated levels of physical and sexual abuse of a young victim would certainly seem to indicate that these bio-fathers were not very nurturing toward their children. The hypothesis of early age bonding deterring later sexual abuse appears to have credibility. Step-fathers due to physical absence did not have this deterrent; bio-fathers due to their aggressiveness were not likely to have benefitted from the nurturant process either. Based on this evidence it seems proximity is less important than early age bonding and the evolution of strong developmental ties between the adult and the child. Therefore, step-fathers who are denied the opportunity to attach are apparently at a greater risk of sexually abusing. In the same way, bio-fathers who do not participate in nurturing

activities related to child rearing appear to face a similar risk.

c) Disclosure

In the area of disclosure, the primary examination was in the following three areas, it was hypothesized that: 1) step-fathers would benefit less from family silence; 2) abuse an older victim more developmentally capable of purposeful disclosure, and 3) would abuse at a more serious level prompting more accidental disclosure due to injury, and more purposeful disclosure by the victim to end the abuse. The underlying assumption is, that more step-father sexual abuses are disclosed than are bio-father abuses, due to family structure and the mechanics of the abuse.

As earlier discussed, the individual risk assessment done by the perpetrator relative to the likelihood of detection is not measurable within the confines of a file survey. As well, there are limits to any claims that might be made as to the deterrent effect based on a sample of confirmed abusers. This research will only address likelihood of detection as it relates to the validity of current incidence rates.

i) Family Collusion

Although this was fully discussed relative to the maintenance of opportunity it is important to reiterate the salient features. The initial hypothesis that step-fathers would benefit less from family collusion than their bio-counterparts was not proven. More step-mates refused to report (Table 14) and there were more nuclear family disclosures from bio-families (Table 16). There was not sufficient evidence in this study to

conclude that bio-fathers are in any way protected more by their nuclear family, or conversely that step-fathers are protected less. In fact, step-fathers may have benefitted the most from any "conspiracy of silence" within the families in this study.

ii) Developmental Stage

It was hypothesized that the disclosure of bio-father abuse may be minimized due to abuse of younger victims. It is believed that younger victims would purposelessly disclose less often due to developmental limitations. Conversely, it is hypothesized that step-fathers will abuse an older victim more capable of purposeful disclosure. Lastly, abuses by a step-father were expected to be disclosed more rapidly than abuse by bio-fathers.

As demonstrated in Table 8, bio-fathers in this study did in fact abuse younger victims; 57% of the bio-father victims were under age 11, 33% were under age 7 and 12% were under the age of 3. Step-fathers abused no victims below age 3, 10% of their victims were below age 7 and 32.5% of their victims were below age 11. The majority of step-victims were aged 12 - 15 (52.5%). Additionally, as seen in Table 20, step-victims did more often purposely disclose. Disclosure was purposeful in 80% of the step-father abuses. Purposeful disclosure accounted for 60% of the total disclosures in bio-fathers, with a 40% accidental disclosure rate. Through an examination of victim age at the point of accidental disclosure (Table 23) we can see that 38.4% of the accidental disclosures were from bio-victims under the age of

seven. Interestingly, 50% of all bio-father abusers of children under age 11 were disclosed accidentally (Table 24 and Table 8). Additionally, accidental disclosure was more likely amongst bio-victims who sustained injuries related to abuse (Table 24).

ACCIDENTAL DISCLOSURE BY AGE OF VICTIM

TABLE 23 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N - 8		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N - 13	
	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	0	0%	2	15.4%
4 - 7	1	12.5%	3	23%
8 - 11	2	25%	4	30.7%
12 - 15	5	62.5%	3	23%
16 +	0	0%	1	7.6%

ACCIDENTAL DISCLOSURE BY SUSTAINED INJURY

TABLE 24 VARIABLE	STEP-VICTIMS N - 8		BIO-VICTIMS N - 13	
	#	%	#	%
Physical Abuse	0		2	
Sexual Abuse	2		5	
None	6		6	

In an examination of the unsubstantiated abuses (all unsubstantiated abuses were withheld from the larger study and are only used in this section of the study) (Table 25), we can see in both offender categories the younger age child is over represented. By also adding to this the cases substantiated by only the investigating worker, (the lowest level of substantiation in this study), we can see bio-victims were again much younger

then step-victims (Table 26). More importantly, when we compare the age of the child at disclosure in all substantiated cases (Table 8) to the ages of the children in unsubstantiated and low substantiated cases (Table 27) we can see that 33% of the bio-victims in Table 8 are below age 7 compared to 58% of the bio-victims in Table 27. Similarly for step-fathers, in Table 8 representing substantiated cases, 10% of the step-victims were under age 7 compared with 29% under 7 in the low and unsubstantiated cases. Also of note, the only two under age 3 victims of a step-father were unsubstantiated.

We know abuse of younger age children is more difficult to detect. In this study, bio-fathers abused a younger population and as one would expect, many of these were unsubstantiated. Step-fathers also benefitted from abuse of younger children vis-a-vis disclosure, but due to limited access to a younger population did not benefit to the same extent as bio-fathers.

In this study, the hypothesis that bio-fathers may benefit vis-a-vis disclosure of a younger victim has merit. Bio-fathers did abuse younger victims who purposely disclosed less often and were accidentally disclosed more often than their step-counterparts. It was further hypothesized that step-father abuse would be more rapidly disclosed than that of bio-father abuse. Table 15 shows this is not true; 37.5% of step-victims disclosed within the first six months, 25% within one month and 10% within one week. Bio-victims disclosing within one week represented 21% of the sample, 24% disclosed within one month of onset and 33%

disclosed within the first six months. The largest group of victims, bio and step, were abused in excess of two years before disclosing. Although slightly more step-victims disclosed in the first six months, clearly more bio-victims disclosed in the first week.

UNSUBSTANTIATED BY AGE OF VICTIM

TABLE 25	STEP-FATHERS N-6/46 13%		BIO-FATHERS N-11/44 25%	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	2	33.3%	3	27.2%
4 - 7	2	33.3%	4	36.3%
8 - 12	1	16.6%	0	0%
12 - 15	1	16.6%	3	27.2%
15 +	0	0%	1	9%

UNSUBSTANTIATED AND LOW SUBSTANTIATION BY VICTIM AGE AT DISCLOSURE

TABLE 26	STEP-FATHERS N - 17		BIO-FATHERS N - 24	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	2	11.7%	6	25%
4 - 7	3	17.6%	8	33.3%
8 - 11	3	17.6%	2	8.3%
12 - 15	11	64.7%	7	29%
16 +	3	17.6%	1	4.1%
Unknown	1	9%	0	0%

iii) Level of Abuse

SUSTAINED INJURY RELATED TO SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE

TABLE 27 VARIABLE	STEP-FATHER VICTIMS N-14/40		BIO-FATHER VICTIMS N-16/33	
	#	%	#	%
Sexual Abuse	5	35.7%	7	43.7%
Physical Abuse	2	14.2%	6	37.5%
Self-Abuse	7	50%	3	18.7%

In conjunction with an expected more rapid disclosure by step-victims, it was hypothesized that step-fathers would abuse at a more serious level, culminating in not only rapid disclosure, but increased disclosure as a result of victim injury. As demonstrated in Table 28 step-victims were less likely to receive an injury due to the sexual abuse and associated physical abuse than were bio-victims; 39.3% of the bio-victims were injured as a result of sexual abuse or associated physical abuse compared to 17.5% of the step-victims. Relative to injury and contrary to the hypothesis that step-fathers would abuse at the more serious level, Table 6 demonstrates bio-fathers to be the more likely to abuse at the more serious levels. As was earlier indicated, the measure of penis-body entry would support the notion that bio-fathers in this study are abusing at more serious levels. As seen in Table 29 more bio-fathers abused via penal/body entry and often the victim was below age 7.

PENAL/BODY ENTRY BY AGE OF VICTIM AT DISCLOSURE

TABLE 28	STEP-FATHERS N-12 (32.5%)		BIO-FATHERS N-14 (52%)	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	0	0%	2	14.2%
4 - 7	2	16.6%	3	21.4%
8 - 11	1	8.3%	3	21.4%
12 - 15	6	50%	5	35.7%
16 +	3	25%	1	7%

Relative to disclosure, the fundamental hypothesis was that step-father abuses may be more readily disclosed than bio-father abuses. The assumption was that current elevated rates of step-father abuse, may be more a function of disclosure than of actual incidence rates. There is limited support for this notion in the areas examined in this research. Specifically, step-fathers do not appear prejudiced relative to disclosure via family collusion. Bio-fathers however, may be more protected by their victim's reluctances and inabilities to disclose. More bio-victims were reluctant to disclose and more bio-victims are abused at young ages, thereby obscuring effective disclosure.

Last, bio-fathers not step-fathers as was hypothesized, abuse their victims at the more serious levels. Therefore, any expectations regarding elevated rates of disclosure amongst step-victims prompted by abuse severity are not proven.

d) Summary

It was hypothesized in this study that the higher

incidence rates of step-father abuse may in part be accountable to differing disclosure characteristics. This in fact was the case, although not to the extent as was expected. Two interesting phenomena did emerge relative to disclosure which deserve elaboration.

First, interestingly, step-mates more often knew of the abuse and did not report it. The "spousal conspiracy of silence" expected in bio-families actually emerged in step-families. One possible explanation for this is that step-mates have the additional concern of being blamed of complicity at some level and therefore may lose the child or children to the bio-father. A bio-father considering a custody application could ask for no better "ammunition" than that of a mother's inability to protect her children from such a serious offence. The fear of this loss would in part seem to support this refusal to report found in step-mates. The reality of this concern is undeniable. Practitioners and Investigators must be forthright and open when dealing with these step-mates, that their child's protection is paramount. Any subsequent custodial applications are secondary and that reporting may in the end be of more benefit in a custody battle.

Second, and of great interest is the discrepancy of the age of victims abused by the two offender categories. Bio-fathers did abuse a much younger victim and we know detection of the abuse of young children is very difficult. As was expected, this study found forty percent (40%) of the bio-victims under age 7 disclosed

accidentally and in fifty-eight percent (58%) of these accidental disclosure there was little or no substantiation of the abuse.

For step-fathers, the story is quite different. Their victims were most often ages 12 - 15. The abuse was purposely disclosed in eighty percent (80%) of the cases and was more often substantiated. Clearly in this regard, more step-fathers are disclosed as abusers. In their study of children under age 6 who were sexually abused, Mian et al (1986) found four percent (4%) father figure offenders and seventy-nine percent (79%) bio-fathers; further, they found the likelihood of purposeful disclosure diminished significantly with age. Clearly, the findings of this study support Mian et al's findings that bio-fathers predominantly abuse a younger victim and are often only disclosed accidentally.

When one offender groups victims are more likely disclosed accidentally, the presumption is that many more are not disclosed or uncovered by victim symptomology. Although more study is definitely needed, there appears to be a link between incidence rates and characteristics of disclosure. If further study bears this out, we may see a reduction in the discrepancy between the incidence rates of the two offender groups.

Also of great importance is the need to emphasize the necessity of those front-line practitioners such as physicians, teachers and social workers to be knowledgeable and keenly aware that any symptoms or indications of sexual abuse in the young child must be pursued. As well it is apparent that greater

attention is needed to develop better interview and investigation techniques with this young population, as many of those disclosed go unsubstantiated at any level beyond the investigating worker's belief.

CHAPTER VI

ABUSE PHASE COMMENTARY

I INTRODUCTION

Much of what is important relative to the abuse phase has already been elaborated upon above. It is, however, important to make a distinction between bio and step-offenders during the abuse phase of the abuse sequence.

In the context of this research the abuse phase begins with the initiation of sexual activity, no matter what the sexual act, between the step or bio-father and their daughter. This becomes a critical pivot point in the abuse sequence, many perpetrators following sober second thought do not proceed with subsequent abuse. Others do not show similar restraint and perpetuate the abuse over longer periods of time.

Once again, we are confounded by the lack of predictability relative to the impact of sexual abuse on the victim. Researchers, such as Gelinas (1983), Herman (1981) and Ellenson (1986), argue a single episode is enough to cause significant later life dysfunction. Other researchers recommend examining not only duration, but also the characteristics of the abusive activity; such as severity and perpetrator reaction to disclosure. In this regard an examination of duration, severity and reaction to disclosure will be undertaken and comparisons made between the offender populations. Essentially, the question becomes: do these two offender populations proceed similarly or differently through the abuse phase, from initiation to

disclosure?

II DEFINITIONS

a) Duration

Duration is defined as the period of time between initiation and cessation of sexual activity. This will be as reported by the victim.

b) Severity

Severity was fully defined above as the level of abuse seriousness based on sexual acts performed on, and/or, by the victim.

c) Reaction to Disclosure

This refers specifically to the perpetrator's reaction to the disclosure of the sexual abuse. This will range from perpetrator self-disclosure through to never admitting abuse occurred.

Information will be collected specific to these three variables and a comparison made between step and bio-fathers.

III DISCUSSION

a) Severity, Duration and Reaction to Disclosure

As presented above, with respect to disclosure, the level or seriousness of the abuse is a potentially significant differentiating characteristic between step and bio-fathers. Abuse severity has been linked to victim impact, disclosure rates and family receptivity to reconstitution (Pierce & Pierce 1985;

Conte and Schuerman 1987).

Earlier it was hypothesized relative to disclosure that step-fathers would perpetrate the more severe abuses. It is important to examine severity in a larger context than just its effect on disclosure rates. The associated factors of severity, duration and the perpetrator's reaction to disclosure will be examined. The purpose of this process will be to establish what differences, if any, exist between the perpetrators during the abuse phase. Further, if differences are found, to comment on these differences in light of perpetrator motivation and possible outcomes of intervention with the family.

b) Severity

Succinctly stated, this study found bio-fathers abused at the more serious levels by every measure applied in this research. This includes not only the sexual act, but also co-associated physical abuse and abuse to a younger victim. Further, bio-victims were maintained to the abusive relationship by actual and threatened physical assault more often than their step-counterparts.

In direct contrast step-fathers abused at less serious levels and were less frequently involved in co-associated physical abuse. Step-victims were less often caused to perform sexual acts to the perpetrator and when they did so it was at a less serious level. Step-spouses were also less likely to have been abused by the step-father as were step-sibs. Less step-fathers involved multiple victims in sexual activity.

c) Duration

A useful measure at this point would have been the frequency of the sexual activity over the duration of the abuse. Unfortunately, this was not accurately recorded for many of the files investigated, particularly in younger age victims. No agency or provincial recording document requested information on frequency, only worker narratives or process recordings contained this information. Based on the inconsistent recording of this variable it was not included in this study. In retrospect what information was available should have been recorded. Very definitely, future research should include a measure of frequency.

What we do have is a measure of duration between first offence and disclosure (Table 15). Using this measure there is very little difference between the two offender populations. The single largest number of abuse relationships for both populations was in excess of two years. For apparently very different reasons victims of step and bio-fathers chose to allow the abuse to go undisclosed. In bio-families it appears violence was the most likely compliance method. Although more speculative, step-victims appear likely to have been doubly victimized. Whereby they did make early purposeful disclosures within the nuclear family which either weren't believed, or acted upon initially. More step-victims made purposeful disclosures to end the abuse than did bio-victims.

d) Perpetrator Reaction to Disclosure

As seen in Table 30 perpetrator self-disclosure is

unlikely. The majority of both offender populations never disclosed prior to criminal proceedings. Interestingly 16.2% of the step-fathers self-disclosed, there is no indication as to why they would self-disclose. Guilt or fear most readily come to mind, certainly this bears further investigation.

PERPETRATOR SELF-DISCLOSURE

TABLE 29	STEP-FATHER N - 37		BIO-FATHER N - 27	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
Yes before other disclosure	6	16.2%	1	6.2%
Yes after other disclosure	10	27%	10	37%
Never disclosed (admitted abuse)	21	56.7%	16	59.2%

Amongst those bio-fathers who never disclosed the young age victim is again over-represented, 47.3% are below age 7. Clearly, relative to disclosure, to avoid detection a perpetrator would be well advised to abuse a younger victim and if detected, deny adamantly any involvement.

PERPETRATOR NEVER DISCLOSED BY VICTIM AGE

TABLE 30	STEP-FATHER N-23 VICTIMS		BIO-FATHER N-19 VICTIMS	
VARIABLE	#	%	#	%
0 - 3	0	0%	4	21.0%
4 - 7	3	13%	5	26.3%
8 - 11	5	21.7%	3	15.7%
12 - 15	10	43.4%	6	31.5%
16 +	4	17.3%	1	5.2%
Unknown	1	4.3%	0	0%

e) Summary

The major distinction that continues to emerge between these two offender categories is that of severity. Eight-nine percent of both offender groups allowed the abuse to go on until someone else disclosed and fifty-seven percent never disclosed. For both groups the duration of the abuse was often in excess of two years.

One outstanding variable not examined, that being frequency of abuse, clearly needs to be considered in future research.

The fundamental question to be addressed vis a vis the abuse phase was; do these offender populations proceed similarly through the abuse phase? The short answer appears to be no. The characteristics of the perpetrators are similar in that they both had alcohol functioning as a disinhibitor, they both abused over long durations, and they were both unlikely to self-disclose or admit the abuse, often even in the face of criminal convictions.

The similarities end at the severity of the sexual activity as well as the acting out of the tyrannical personality.

A large assumption that bears further research, but that makes intuitive sense to this researcher, is the relationship between abuse severity and heightened post abuse trauma in the victim. Although many victims will be significantly distressed following even single abuse episodes, it seems likely the potential for post-abuse disturbance increases with severity and duration. In this regard the abuse experience for most of the bio-victims in this study was very different from their step-counterparts. Similarly the abuse experience for the offenders was very different as well, vis a vis sexual activity/severity.

Earlier in this research it was postulated that given the severity factors associated with bio-family abuse that the bio-fathers' motivation may be representative of a need for control and dominance and of greater individual disturbance. This becomes central to the last phase of the abuse sequence, that being outcome. Clearly more research is required, but the predominant view in the literature suggests successful family reconstitution rest on change in the perpetrator.

As other research moves into the outcome phase, this research has raised two critical issues related to severity:

1. function of severity and duration vis a vis victim impact,
2. level of abuse perpetrated and perpetrator motivation vis a vis potential for family reconstitution.

CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY DISCUSSION

The central hypothesis of this study was, that if treated as discrete entities and compared by their characteristics, step-father abusers and bio-father abusers would present as two distinct offender groups. Further, that there would be systematic and identifiable differences between these groups. In conclusion, in this study there appears to be systematic and identifiable differences between these two offender groups. Three major differences bear greater consideration. They are: i) The Function of the Taboos; ii) Severity of the Abuse; and iii) The Function of Disclosure.

a) Taboos

In the beginning of this research, it was hypothesized that some differences between step and bio-father abusers could be accounted for by understanding the differences in the taboos. Although this is apparently true, most aptly demonstrated by the rapid onset in step-father abuses, it didn't seem to completely account for the discrepancy in incidence rates. Nor did it explain why the child sex taboos don't function universally. Earlier in this study, we identified that a critical test of taboo differences would be the absence of any other explanation for elevated step-father incidence rates. This research indicates that although the taboo difference is undeniable, it is not the only functional restraint of intra-familial father-daughter sexual

abuse. What began to emerge through this study was the question: Are the taboos the stronger deterrents or is co-development and early age nurturance?

Through the examination of early age presence and evidence of early age nurturance as well as co-development, a tentative explanation began to emerge. Simply, as Herman (1981) argues, if fathers shared the nurturant tasks they would be less likely to sexually abuse later on. In this study, the majority of step-fathers were geographically not present in the critical first three years. Similarly, the bio-fathers in this study were present, but to a large extent abusive in these formative years. No data was available about the sharing of nurturing responsibilities in either of these family types. This is very clearly an area where further research is needed.

The taboos against child sex and incest are universally understood, but not universally adhered to. Very possibly the taboo is itself cultivated and developed during the process of nurturing a child. The taboos may be present as a cultural moray that becomes individual reality through asexual co-development. In this regard, the taboo is itself a conditioned process with the basis of association more important than kinship. The work of Parker & Parker (1986) is very clearly supported by the findings of this study. They found it is not biological status, but rather the relationship between father and child during early socialization that is important in explaining why some fathers abuse.

This should have a high priority in future studies, as well as with those practitioners working with expectant families around child care and with therapists intervening in a post-abuse family. Importantly and specific to the high risk step-families, efforts should be made to educate the step-daughter, step-mother and step-fathers about elevated risks and the importance of good family communication. Child Protection Services and Local Boards of Education could work closely together to educate potential victims about prevention and disclosure. Providers of Marriage Preparation Courses could include discussions of intra-familial sexual abuse in their agendas. The implications of this theoretical posture are widespread and will generally require a social change in attitude toward paternal contributions to child care; this research suggests the change will be worth the effort.

b) Severity

Contrary to the assumptions of this researcher, and with the exception of Phelan (1986) most contemporary researchers in this area, bio-fathers emerged as the more likely to abuse at the most serious levels.

This raises a very interesting question; why did the incest taboo fail so absolutely? Many of these bio-fathers were not at all restrained in the level of their abuses. Phelan (1986) suggests "...the incest taboo may operate so effectively that when the taboo is broken, a more complex rationalization must be constructed, thereby allowing for more serious types of sexual behaviour to occur". (p. 537). Conversely, the taboo may not have

been a limiting factor in any way in many of these bio-fathers. Their abuses may be representative of greater individual and family pathology. Support for this motion was found in regard to elevated rates of physical abuse to bio-spouses, co-associated physical and sexual abuse of their victims and greater likelihood of abusing more than one of their children. As suggested above, these bio-fathers may have been unable to develop healthy attachments within their nuclear family, thereby allowing them to abuse at the most serious levels.

On a more practical level, these findings have spawned several recommendations for Child Welfare practitioners:

- 1) Never assume a single victim in any family situation, but particularly not in bio-families.
- 2) Always check for co-associated physical abuse of the victim, spouse and siblings.
- 3) In restrained or cryptic disclosures always have the victim checked medically for forensic evidence.
- 4) In unsubstantiated situations be particularly aware of perpetrator retribution to his victims in bio-families.
- 5) Whenever possible, have supervised access only between the perpetrator and the victim until the perpetrator has admitted his actions and completed treatment.
- 6) Never over estimate the biological connection as in some way minimizing the abuse or its outcome.

c) Incidence and Disclosure

This research began with the assumption that much of the

discrepancy in incidence rates between bio and step-fathers could be accounted for by differing disclosure characteristics. Clearly, some of the discrepancy can be attributed to the characteristics of the bio-fathers abuses, e.g. victim age, use of threats and actual physical abuse. However, even with this considered and with the recognition of Russells accessibility argument, step-fathers seem still to be more likely to sexually abuse their daughters. Through this study, no "black and white" explanation emerged. The answer in my mind is a combination of factors including motivation, opportunity and response to social and psychological inhibitors. That said, however, if one factor stands out it would be the function of attachment. The rudimentary assessment of the function attachment vis-a-vis sexual abuse done here provides only enough evidence to suggest more research is needed into this phenomena. Not only may this be a major distinction between groups, it may go a long way to explaining why bio-fathers sexually abuse as well.

Again, to end on a practical level, disclosure is the key to ending the abuse cycle. Once again, we are confounded by the lack of predictability relative to the impact of sexual abuse on the victim. Researchers, such as Gelinas (1983), Herman (1981) and Ellenson (1986), argue a single episode is enough to cause significant later life dysfunction.

This speaks specifically to those of us in the field who can influence the promotion of opportunities for a child to disclose. This includes:

- 1) Active and visible Child Welfare participation in child situations, e.g. schools and clubs.
- 2) Abuse detection education for teachers, medical practitioners and club leaders.
- 3) Ongoing prevention initiatives -- abuse proofing body awareness, body rights.
- 4) Abuse detection awareness/education for parents not only as it relates to spouses, but also to babysitters, extended family and significant others.
5. Ongoing support to community anti-violence campaigns and programs, particularly as they may relate to restrained spousal disclosures.

d) The Last Word

In summary, there appears to be sufficient evidence in this study to conclude that step-father abusers and bio-father abusers are not a homogeneous group. Clearly, further research is required but the fundamental point remains; those researchers who choose not to consider step and bio-fathers as discrete offender types are obscuring any potential revelations that may exist. It is hoped that the evidence in this study and others is convincing enough to the general research population that all future research into intra-familial sexual abuse will consider step and bio-abusers as distinct.

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