CONTESTED DISCOURSES:
THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

By

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ABSTRACT

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Beginning in the mid-1970s feminists, clinicians and child protectionists made claims about child sexual abuse as a social problem. Later joined by the New Right and aided by the mass media, these claimsmakers in constructing four discourses about child sexual abuse, drew on different views of children, childhood, gender, sexuality and families. This dissertation studies these social constructions of child sexual abuse as a social problem from 1974 to the present.

The methodology integrates field work, interviews, documents and media reports to explore the constructions advanced by the four claimsmakers.

Popular accounts identify child sexual abuse as a single, unified problem against which society has mobilized to protect children. Understood from the perspective of social constructionism, however, it becomes clear that sexual abuse is not one problem, but many. Alternately conceptualized by claimsmakers as a problem caused by male

violence, family dysfunction, child exploitation, or decaying social values, analyses of claims about child sexual abuse reveal layers of conflicting narratives. Far from comprising a single, concerted effort to protect children from victimization the constructions about sexual abuse are contested definitions that are actively reshaping social perceptions of children, childhood and sexuality.

Examined in the context of other current social problem constructions focused on children - especially the Missing Children's Movement - claims about child sexual abuse are viewed as a broader reconstruction of childhood. The contention that sexual abuse produces a "damaged child" is placed in relationship to the early 20th century construction of the sentimental child. The constructions about sexual abuse are examined as discourses which redefine the boundaries between adults and children and lead to a rethinking of adults' attempts to protect, control, or empower children.

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Introduction

The most recent history of child sexual abuse has been written as a narrative of social concern for victims of abuse (Butler, 1978; Miller, 1984). Much of this concern has been reflected in a vast literature which seeks to identify the causes and effects of sexual abuse. It has also been reflected in media coverage. A stated aim of this material has been the prevention and ultimate eradication of sexual abuse (MacFarlane and Korbin, 1982). Read from this perspective, the emergence of child sexual abuse as a social problem in the 1970s is the story of a society's increasing concern with children who are victimized by adults. But this reading is at best cursory. It skims the surface without probing the depths of the discourses that have been articulated about sexual abuse. When the history of the labeling of sexual abuse as a social problem is viewed from a social constructionist perspective, the story changes dramatically, for this is neither a singular nor a unilinear narrative.

My research focuses on the contemporary construction of sexual abuse as a social problem by four groups: feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right. In this work I have not tried to enter the debates over whether the actual amount of abuse has increased or whether or not children lie about their victimization. I see such debates as activities of construction, important for what they represent and what they come to symbolize. I have traced the discourses that have emerged around these and other issues and the social contexts in which they appeared, in order to understand how child sexual abuse has been socially constructed.

I have chosen to focus on the discourses which identified sexual abuse as a social problem for several reasons. First, studies of the historical context and institutional structures which led to abuse have been appearing for some time (Rush, 1977; DeMause, 1974; Gordon, 1988). It is by now well documented that children's relative powerlessness in families, schools and day care settings makes them vulnerable to violence. In analyzing sexual abuse I did not want to simply trod a well worn path. Secondly, the discourses that have been sounded about sexual abuse are sociologically rich and compelling. Characterized by ideological agreements and conflicts, the arguments put forward by those who have "discovered" sexual abuse provide maps of contested terrains of modern society

- particularly family and gender arrangements. Finally, in focusing on discourses and uncovering the processes by which they are formulated, advanced and reshaped, I could analyze two significant structures of social problem construction - language and the media. Child sexual abuse has proven to be especially well-suited to understanding the ways in which linguistic choices shape the social construction of reality and in illuminating the roles which the media serve as architects and conduits of construction.

Marked by vastly different political perspectives and social agendas, those who make claims about the nature of sexual abuse share a common view: all believe that they speak in the best interest of children. And this is what makes social problems which center on children so fruitful from a constructionist perspective - the current victims of the problem are not the ones who are shaping its presentation. Those who are now being sexually abused are spoken for and the definitions of what these children are experiencing, what they need and how they should be helped, is generated externally by people who are not only trying to do something about abuse, but who are also trying to advance their own interests.

Viewed from this perspective the construction of child sexual abuse becomes a tale of contested definitions of childhood and of sexuality, of boundaries between adults

and children and of battles about the changing nature of the American family. It is also about the emergence of new ideas about identity and gender. Most importantly, it is a story about power and the social relationship among protection, control and empowerment as it is manifested between adults and children.

The Social Construction of Childhood

Children are unequal to adults. By American cultural definitions, children need to be protected both from themselves and from adults who might harm them. In order to protect children it is necessary to empower them in some ways and control them in others; to restrict their movements and define behaviors which are appropriate and inappropriate. Historical and anthropological analyses reveal that these definitions are bound by time and place (Zelizer, 1985; Kagan, 1984). Norms about how children should be treated fluctuate depending on prevailing social conditions. For instance, Viviana Zelizer (1985) discovered that when children had a clear economic value they were prized for their labor power and this became the basis of their social treatment. In earlier centuries children did not need to be protected from the vicissitudes of work. As children were removed from the paid economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, their emotional worth rose and became the primary basis of their value.

Work then became seen as a source of potential damage to children - something that would strip them of childhood, as if childhood was an inherent characteristic. Thus an ideology arose which depicted children as emotionally priceless, but economically worthless (Zelizer, 1985). Children were valued for being childlike, that is, innocent and dependent.

It is just such definitions of what it means to be childlike which lie at the heart of social problems which affect children (Best, 1987). In the case of child sexual abuse the boundaries between adult and child sexual experiences and their psychological responses, are called into question and debated (Courtois, 1988; Meiselman, 1978). But debates are not limited to purely sexual norms. The entire character of children and childhood itself is being questioned (Winn, 1983). A clear example of this focus has appeared in discussions of whether children are "capable" of lying about sexual abuse. The debate around this question has been cast in rigid dichotomies. On one side children are seen as innocents, never lying about sexual abuse; on the other side children are viewed as diabolical, frequently manipulating adults through sexual abuse charges (Conte, 1982). Sociologically this debate, which reflects historical dichotomizations of children as angels or devils, is less interesting for its resolution than for its content. The question, "Are children as a

group capable of lying about abuse?" reveals more about a society's view of children than it does about children's inherent veracity or duplicity.

The emergence of such issues in the discussion of child sexual abuse helps to make clear that a normative definition of childhood is the backdrop against which abused children are measured. Defining the experience of victims illuminates what it means, socially, to be a non-victim, that is, what it means to simply be a child. It also establishes the existence of experts who have staked claims to identifying the parameters of normal and impaired childhood. These claims are treated as legitimate and given credence because they come from the authority of professions which have been socially sanctioned to regulate definitions of reality. As Paul Starr has written with regard to medicine, "The authority of professions is distinctive because they not only advise actions, but also evaluate the nature of reality and experience..." (Starr, 1982). Childhood and child sexual abuse have become the province of a number of fields, especially: medicine, law, psychiatry, psychology, social work, sociology and theology. Representatives of these professions, through whom the changing history, structure and definitions of childhood have been revealed, are among the claimsmakers about child sexual abuse.

Child Sexual Abuse as a Social Problem

Like other social problems which were "discovered" during the 1970s (e.g., wife battering), child sexual abuse has a long and continuous private history. Its public history has been short and sporadic. Although documentary research by Gordon (1988) shows that social service agencies received frequent reports of sexual abuse during the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was not until the late 1970s that the label social problem as opposed to "cultural taboo" or "psychological fantasy" was applied to the problem. In order to understand how a social problem arena was built around sexual abuse, I have focused on the specific construction of discourses about sexual abuse by particular groups and the emergence of a social and historical environment which made the constructions possible.

The claimsmakers in this case have been: feminists who worked in the rape crisis and battered women's movements and who saw children as socially analogous to women; clinicians who initially were trained to understand their clients as fantasizing about sexual encounters with adults, but who, through complex processes, began to believe their clients' accounts of sexual abuse; child protectionists who had discovered the physical abuse of children in the 1960s; and--coming from quite a different perspective--the New Right which was concerned with what

they identified as the growing fragility of the family and the increasing vulnerability of children. Each group has taken as a central concern the psychological damage done to children who have been abused, and thus each has discussed the nature of childhood and the internal worlds of children within which they identify and assess the situations of those who have been abused. I have come to believe that views of the damaged or endangered child are uniquely modern in construction and that they exist in relation to conceptions of normal, sentimentalized childhood developed during the Progressive Era. The social environment which provided the material conditions for the construction of a social problem included the expanded social and economic roles of women, the changes in the organization of family life and the growth of the mass media.

How Child Sexual Abuse is Understood Today

The claimsmakers' views of child sexual abuse differ on the social causes of abuse, on what is being taken from children when they are abused and on the kind of adult world abused children are plunged into. But there are shared definitions in the field. Consensus in the sexual abuse literature is emerging in the following areas: acts that comprise sexual abuse; characteristics of abusers; psychological ramifications for victims; and requirements for prevention and treatment. This literature has appeared

in a variety of contexts, proliferating in the academic and professional journals and in the popular culture. Whether the information comes from Newsweek or The International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect, from feminists or from the New Right, shapes the context of discussions, the analyses of the origins of the problem and the presentations of potential solutions. Despite these sources of diversity, there is, however, a surprising uniformity in any given discussion about sexual abuse itself. Agreement stems from widespread perception and mounting empirical evidence that sexual abuse is harmful to children because it has short and long term psychological effects. In order to understand how these negative effects are produced it is necessary to have a definition of sexual abuse, an idea of its incidence and prevalence and a profile of those who are at risk for being abused and for abusing.

Prior to reviewing the sexual abuse literature, however, I first need to comment on language. In the following sections I have used the language of the sexual abuse literature. This language is part of the social construction of child sexual abuse as a social problem. The next sections include discussions of victims and survivors, of perpetrators and offenders. By writing about the problem in this manner I am trying to show how child sexual abuse is currently being written about - as a

therapeutic, and sometimes, criminal problem. I am also introducing the language as data. In any project that examines the social construction of a particular social problem, the terms that are used to describe the phenomenon being studied are essential (Hazelrigg, 1985). In the case of child sexual abuse, language seems especially important because this is a social problem that is most often described through metaphors of silence and speech. Silence is credited for the generational perpetuation of sexual abuse; speech is envisioned as a liberatory force. Given this construction, the power of silence and speech to shape perceptions of sexual abuse is substantial.

Defining Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is broadly understood to be any coercive sexual interaction between a child and a more powerful person, either an adult or another child who is five or more years older than the victim (Finkelhor, 1986). This interaction may or may not involve physical contact. In cases where there is no contact, the abuse may include exhibitionism, as well as verbal harassment or seduction. In cases where there is contact the abuse may range from fondling to oral, anal, or vaginal penetration (Russell, 1986; Sgroi, Blick and Porter, 1982; Butler, 1978). By defining sexual abuse as a multidimensional phenomenon, it is possible to see abuse occurring on a continuum and

producing a range of possible effects. It also brings questions of the incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse to the forefront.

Estimating the Number of Sexually Abused Children

Perhaps no issue has been more central in defining sexual abuse as a social problem than the question of how frequently children are sexually victimized. Establishing the scope of the problem has been essential both for grabbing public attention and for garnering research funds. Early estimates, which emerged from studies of college students, were that 1 in every 4 girls and 1 in every 11 boys were sexually abused by age 18 (Finkelhor, 1979). While the figures for abuse of girls has remained constant and in fact is the same estimate given by Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin and Gebhard in 1953, the figures for boys have often been questioned and revised.

It has frequently been noted that gathering accurate data on boys is difficult for several reasons. First, boys are less often reported as victims by physicians, teachers or parents. Perceived as agentic and aggressive, boys are often viewed as too powerful to be abused or culpable when it occurs. Boys do not fall as easily into the category of victim as girls do. Secondly, like girls most boys are abused by men. Although at least 95% of these assaults are perpetrated by heterosexually oriented adults, because the

assault is homosexual, boys will sometimes fear the implications of the assault for their own sexual identity (James and Nasjelti, 1983; Finkelhor, 1984). Putting aside the fact that the attainment of sexual identity is a complex and complicated matter, the fear of being labeled homosexual in a homophobic society is a powerful form of social control that has made some boys reluctant to report incidents of sexual abuse. To eradicate this problem, the federal government made research into the sexual abuse of boys a priority area in its request for funding proposals for the fall of 1985 (Federal Register, Sept. 4, 1985). Until findings from the funded projects are available, the sexual abuse of boys has been estimated by some researchers by reviewing all available survey data on the topic. Using this approach David Finkelhor and his colleagues found that between 2.5 and 5% of boys under 13 had been sexually victimized. Using 1980 census data Finkelhor generalized these findings to the entire U.S. population of boys under 13 and stated that "if these figures are correct, a total of 550,000 to 1,100,000 of the currently 22 million boys under 13 would eventually be victimized" (Finkelhor, 1984). This analysis has in turn led to further estimates that anywhere from one in every eight to one in every four boys, a rate equal to girls, is sexually victimized before age 18 (Groth, 1985).

These estimates of sexual abuse include all cases within and outside of families, those who have been assaulted once, those who have been assaulted for years and those who have been abused by more than one person. When Diana Russell (1986) analyzed rates of incest among women in the largest non-clinical probability study done to date, she found that one in every six women had been incestuously abused. From this number she extrapolated that 160,000 per million women were incest victims; 45,000 of these were father/daughter cases. Russell's findings were considered essential for understanding incest because she was not examining psychotherapy or prison populations where incest experiences could potentially be overrepresented. Her estimates therefore have been considered more statistically accurate than those of clinicians (Courtois, 1988).

A second reason for the significance of Russell's findings was that they clearly challenged what had been prevailing wisdom in psychiatry, one of the arenas from which expert opinion on child sexual abuse had traditionally been sought. As late as 1975 one leading psychiatric textbook estimated that incest occurred in one in every million homes (Freedman, Kaplan and Sadock, 1975). Russell's statistics called for a rethinking of the prevalence of incest in American families.

Once an estimate of the number of sexually abused children became available, the question arose as to whether or not these figures represent an historically constant level of abuse which was just being recognized or an increase in the amount of sexual abuse in the country. The American Humane Association had revealed that the reported number of sexual abuse cases had been rising every year since 1976. Locally, in Michigan The Lansing State Journal (1984) had reported a 300% increase in Michigan case reports during the 1980s. Obviously, the popular attention given to sexual abuse in newspapers, magazines and on television has created a climate where abuse can be reported more easily. School-based prevention programs, and the use of teachers and physicians as mandated reporters of suspected sexual abuse have also increased the number of incidents coming to public attention. Yet, historical evidence, such as that presented by Florence Rush (1977), Linda Gordon and Paul O'Keefe (1984) and Linda Gordon (1988) suggested that these reports of abuse actually represented a decrease over past cases or a constant number of incidents. Rush, citing documentary evidence from Greek and Roman cultures, showed that a large number of children were sexually abused as prostitutes. Gordon looked at the structure of American families which in the past gave perpetrators greater sexual access to children. Gordon and O'Keefe presented data from Boston

social service agencies' records that, in a random sample of 502 cases, produced 50 reports of incest. This rate was comparable to that given in a number of contemporary studies. Contrary to this evidence, Diana Russell's recent survey results yielded information that the number of incest cases have "quadrupled from the early 1900s to 1973 (and) this was also the case for extrafamilial child abuse before 14 years of age" (Russell, 1986).

It may be impossible to ever truly know if the rates of abuse have been increasing, decreasing or remaining constant. The stigma around reporting abuse, although apparently diminishing, still exists. In addition, there is pressure on children to keep sexual abuse secret. Studies which attempt to ascertain the historical prevalence of abuse suffer from flaws in rates of reporting. Given a social constructionist view of sexual abuse, the actual number of victims there are may not be as important as the perception that today children are sexually abused in epidemic proportions. Researchers tend to agree that there has always been and continues to be a substantial number of children who are sexually abused. There are a number of factors which make some children more vulnerable to sexual abuse than others.

The Population at Risk

Not all children are equally at risk for sexual abuse. Initial attempts to discover which children might be more vulnerable tended to focus on the earlier myths of abuse. Past perceptions represented sexual abuse, particularly incest, as a problem of rural, lower class families (Butler, 1978). These families were frequently thought to be black. When research was initiated on victims of abuse these ideas turned out to be false.

Two models have been created to help identify high risk children. The first model comes from David Finkelhor's 1984 compilation of theory and research from which he designed a checklist of "Eight Vulnerability Factors in Childhood." These factors included: the presence of a stepfather, living for any period of time without mother, not being close to mother, mother never finishing high school, a sexually punitive mother, physically affectionless father, a family income of less that $10,000 and two or fewer friends in childhood. Two thirds of those children who had five factors present in their lives were sexually victimized. Each additional factor increased the likelihood that a child would be abused by 10 or 20% (Finkelhor, 1984).

Finkelhor's model--which did not find a correlation for ethnicity, religion, size of family, or presence of physical abuse--did reveal some important themes. Children

with powerless or relatively powerless mothers were more likely to be victimized. Children who were isolated were more likely to be sexually assaulted. This finding appeared frequently in all of the child abuse literature. Stepfathers were found to be more likely to sexually abuse their stepchildren than were biological fathers to abuse their children. This finding was also documented by Russell (1986) among others. Some have conjectured that stepfather's abuse stems from a lack of inhibition on the part of the stepfather who does not experience an incest taboo (this reason is often cited alongside the high incest rates which seems to indicate that many people do not experience the incest taboo as a mechanism of social control) (Courtois, 1988). Women who were divorced were also more likely to bring strangers into the home who might view the daughters as potential sexual partners. Finkelhor also discovered that fathers who were politically and morally conservative were more likely to sexually abuse their children. Within these families victims were punished for showing any curiosity about sexuality or evidencing any sexual behavior. On the basis of this information Finkelhor stated "sexually severe families...foster a high risk for sexual exploitation." This view fits with many studies of moral conservatism, religiosity and "sexual deviance," including the infamous Tearoom Trade, (Humphries, 1963).

The most controversial factor in Finkelhor's study was the finding that an income of less than $10,000 put a child at greater risk for sexual abuse. Finkelhor himself makes clear that part of the greater risk actually reflects a higher likelihood of being reported. Upper-class children are also at risk for sexual abuse but are less frequently reported. Nevertheless the income finding, which has also appeared in Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz's (1980) classic work on family violence, appears significant.

Finkelhor's model was drawn exclusively from research on girls; his findings fit with a second model which emerges from Diana Russell's (1986) and Judith Herman's (1981) research on female incest victims. Russell found that parental absence and unavailability in the form of mother's employment outside the home, disability or illness, or complete absence of natural mother or father, made a child vulnerable. In addition, poor parent-child relationships, especially with mothers who were perceived as harsh, punitive and/or emotionally cold added to the likelihood of victimization. A conflictual relationship between a girl's parents and, as noted above, the presence of a stepfather, also increased the possibility of sexual abuse. Many of these findings were reported early in the 1980s by Judith Herman, a psychiatrist who many have credited with being one of the first "discoverers" of child sexual abuse (Bass and Davis, 1988). Herman identified

what is now considered the classic family constellation of girls at risk. She found that incestuous families often included authoritarian, morally rigid fathers and physically or psychologically absent mothers. The girls themselves were socially isolated (Herman, 1981).

Information on what makes boys vulnerable to sexual assault has been harder to elicit. Finkelhor (1984), in attempting to produce a similar model to the one he created for girls, discovered that boys, like men who were raped, were more likely to be abused with other children present. Another finding was that boys whose abuse was reported came from poorer families than abused girls; that they were more likely than abused girls to be living in single parent families; and that they were often physically, as well as sexually, abused. Because it has commonly been found that men who sexually abuse children have been sexually abused themselves (Groth, 1979), identifying boys at risk for sexual victimization has not only been thought important for preventing their abuse, but also for preventing future generations from abuse.

The Characteristics of Sexual Abusers

As the study of child sexual abuse expanded, new information on perpetrators was being developed and disseminated. Previous studies of offenders were based on prison populations which tended to skew the data towards

those who abused outside of the family (Groth, 1985). New research has focused on perpetrators who have received therapy, instead of, or in addition to, being imprisoned. This change is significant because it means that research is available on a wider sample of offenders from different classes and races. Limited data on women who sexually abuse children are also becoming available, although most abuse and therefore most data, are based on studies of men.

Ninety-five percent of abuse of girls and 80% of abuse of boys is reported to be done by men or adolescent boys (Finkelhor, 1984). Many researchers trace the causes for such large numbers of male perpetrators to patterns of gender socialization (Finkelhor, 1984, 1986; Russell, 1986; Herman, 1981). Because they are primarily raised by women who must communicate a complex set of conscious and unconscious gender expectations to them, boys learn what it means to be masculine in American society through a process of disidentification with the feminine (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977). As a consequence boys' internal worlds are based on experiences of distance and differentiation. The requirement that boys learn to be separate and autonomous means that they also must become separate from the core of their emotional selves - the part of themselves that was initially tied to and identified with their mothers (Chodorow, 1978). In this process boys learn that sexual desires and emotional attachments need not coincide.

Theorists hypothesize that this ability to split sex and emotion makes it easier for men to view women and children as objects than as people and to direct aggression against them. Subsequently, sexual assaults against women and girls are easier to perpetrate because they are focused on someone who is experienced as an "other" (Sanford, 1980).

This theory, which is largely drawn from feminist oriented, psychoanalytic accounts of gender socialization help explain why men would more frequently abuse than women and why they would victimize women and girls. It also has been used to account for the repetitive finding that men who sexually abuse children have been abused themselves. According to these theorists, boys experience sexual assaults as shattering experiences in the same way that girls do. What differs is that boys split their emotional pain and anger. Turning their anger outward and identifying with the aggressor, who is presumably another male, boys retaliate for their assaults by becoming offenders. Girls, in contrast are thought to turn their aggression towards themselves becoming self-destructive and continuing to be victims through relationships with men or women who abuse them and/or their children (Russell, 1986). Because these findings are verified over and over, many researchers believe that there is utility in drawing on theories of gender socialization to explain the behavior of sexual abuse perpetrators (Sanford, 1980; Howells, 1981).

Nicholas Groth (1985), who has worked with over 2,000 male offenders, agrees with this perspective and has added to it a theory of personality types. According to Groth (1982) there are two kinds of offenders: regressed and fixated. Regressed offenders are those who are capable of having mature, adult relationships, but because of some external stress, such as unemployment or spouse's illness, will seek out children as substitute sexual partners. These offenders are usually married men, and their victims are frequently their daughters. It is these offenders who are accounted for in the classic incest model of mother-absent families. According to this model, when the wife is sexually unavailable to the husband, he uses the daughter as a surrogate partner. Here the daughter is imbued with adult characteristics and is asked to take care of the father's sexual and non-sexual needs.

Fixated offenders are those whose sexual identity formation has been prematurely foreclosed, usually because of their sexual victimization. These offenders see children as their peers, choose boys most frequently as their victims, and identify strongly with those they abuse. Fixated offenders usually begin sexually abusing children at age thirteen or fourteen, although their abusive behavior is usually ignored at that stage and identified as harmless, adolescent experimentation (Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Kaplan, 1985). However, it is clear that these

boys establish patterns of sexual exploitation of children beginning at an early age.

Although Groth's typology is useful for identifying certain patterns to abuse, it fails to capture the complexity of either inter- or intrafamily abuse. In presenting two types of perpetrators, Groth omits variations in motivation of the offender and fails to ask a key question: how is it that children come to be seen as appropriate "sexual partners?" An additional problem exists in Groth's research. It lends itself to a position of blaming women for not being sexually available to men and thereby creating an environment conducive to sexual abuse. This is most clearly reflected in the case of so-called regressed offenders who abuse children because of the absence of an age-appropriate partner. Taken to its logical conclusion this makes women responsible for controlling and containing men's sexuality. Although women's civilizing role in taming male sexuality is neither a new theme nor a new expectation (Welter, 1973) its emergence in Groth's typology perpetuates the legacy of mother blaming which has been a prominent theme in past discussions of incest.

David Finkelhor (1984) has constructed a model which adds complexity by emphasizing multiple factors which lead people to sexually abuse children. The model includes four factors, all of which must be present for an individual to

become an offender: emotional congruence, sexual arousal, blockage and disinhibition. Emotional congruence refers to patterns through which the offender has come to view children as compatible sexual "partners." This may be a process of reenacting a past experience of sexual abuse or of seeing children as sexually acceptable because they are not powerful or dominant. Sexual arousal refers to factors by which abusers find children sexually appealing. As Finkelhor and others have pointed out, this is a controversial variable because it raises the issue of whether or not sexual abuse has a sexual component. Although this may be clear to some, for others it raises an older debate, which will be discussed later, about the relationship of sex and violence in rape.

Blockage is both the physical unavailability of more appropriate partners and a psychological experience of finding equal partners too frightening. Finkelhor distinguishes between these situational and developmental issues and, like Groth, notes that most incest cases have a situational dynamic, while many extrafamilial cases express a developmental dynamic. The fourth variable, disinhibition, is where feelings are turned into behaviors. In order for disinhibition to occur there needs to be a breakdown of those social norms which would preclude the sexual use of children. Efforts to identify these factors have frequently focused on the strong correlation between

alcoholism and sexual abuse, the experience of sexual abuse oneself and lack of attachment to children while they were young - an argument used to account for stepfather's overrepresentation as abusers. Authors who have sought social origins for the process of disinhibition have analyzed the property relation between fathers and their children, the sexual objectification of children in advertising and the burgeoning child pornography industry (Finkelhor, 1984; Butler, 1978; Rush, 1977; Herman, 1981).

An additional theoretical perspective which has been used to understand the motivations and behaviors of sexual abusers is based on the addiction model popularized by such groups as Alcoholics Anonymous. According to Patrick Carnes (1983), a psychologist who has been most responsible for developing this view, sexual addictions are experienced in four stage cycles, including: preoccupation, ritualization, compulsive sexual behavior and despair. The sexual addict is described as obsessed by sex which s/he organizes around idiosyncratic rituals which propel him/her to act out sexually. Despair follows each enactment of the first three steps of the cycle because the addict fails to either find fulfillment through sex or to stop repeating the cycle. Addictive sexual behavior may include: compulsive masturbation, exhibitionism, rape and child sexual abuse. Carnes argues that sexual abuse reflects a "profound violation of cultural boundaries" and most often

results from abusers having been abused as children and thereby learning that sex and affection, as well as violence, are inextricably interwoven (Carnes, 1983). People with sexual addictions frequently suffer from other addictions, particularly to drugs and alcohol, forming a personality based on a system of addictions.

The three models offered by Groth, Finkelhor and Carnes have been drawn primarily and sometimes exclusively, on data gathered from male perpetrators. In the past seven years there has been growing interest in the topic of female perpetrators. One of the key questions which has been addressed, but not yet satisfactorily answered is: do women sexually abuse children far less frequently than men or is the sexual abuse which women perpetrate hidden by certain cultural views of women? Women are rarely arrested for sexually abusing children. Groth reported that in his work with offenders who abuse children, only 3 of 253 offenders were women (Groth, 1979; Finkelhor, 1984). Nevertheless, Groth believes that women sexually abuse children to a much greater extent than is reflected in statistical evidence.

Groth is not alone in speculation about women as perpetrators. Some theorists and clinicians believe that women sometimes sexually abuse children under the guise of normal mothering. Affection and nurturance can, according to these theories, slip somewhat easily into abusive

situations without raising suspicions about inappropriate sexual behavior (Justice and Justice, 1979). Because men do not primarily nurture children their behavior is more easily labeled as abusive. An additional point is that because women's sexuality is culturally defined as less threatening and potent than men's, women who sexually abuse children are defined as not doing much damage. Even though this notion has been challenged by Kempe and Kempe (1984) who cite mother-son incest as the most devastating form of all abuse, it still enjoys some popularity, particularly in the mass media.

Even though statistics are not completely accurate for numbers of female perpetrators, overwhelming evidence suggests that do men do abuse children in much greater numbers than women. Diana Russell (1986) found in her survey of incest victims that 5% of incestuous offenders were women. Additionally, she found that her respondents described their experience in less abusive and coercive terms than those that involved male relatives. They also occurred with less frequency (Russell, 1986). This evidence gains more importance in light of the fact that most female offenders are perpetrators of incest as opposed to committing sexual assault outside the home (Finkelhor, 1984).

Both Finkelhor and Russell have speculated on why men would abuse children more than women and why the issue of

women as perpetrators began to gain such widespread attention in the early 1980s. Their conclusions are structured by an observation about reality and by a gender analysis. The two sociologists have noted that clinicians are hearing more from their clients about women perpetrating sexual abuse. This coincides with the fact that clinicians are hearing more about sexual abuse in general. Their gender analysis suggests that there is a cultural recoiling in the face of statistics which reveal such high proportions of male offenders. The idea that men and women might offend in equal numbers means that sexual abuse could be traced to non-gender origins. Sexually abusing children could thus be explained as part of a more evil side of human nature or ascribed to some element of the social power which adults hold over children. But since men have a greater proclivity to sexually abuse children, the issue does emerge as a gendered, as well as a generational one. There is something in male socialization, in their institutional power and subsequent experiences which make them sexually abuse children more than women do (Finkelhor and Russell, 1984).

The Impact on Victims

If research and theory about those who abuse have grown substantially over the past decade, comparable work on the experiences of victims has expanded even more

rapidly and in many ways, as will be discussed later, the impact of abuse on the victim's identity has become the most central facet of the current construction of child sexual abuse. Much of the work describes and analyzes the short and long term effects of abuse.

According to many experts in the study of child sexual abuse, initial effects of sexual victimization may last from one day to two years. The effects are both internal and external (Sgroi, Porter, Blick, 1982). The internal or more psychologically experienced effects may include: sleep disorders, eating disorders, fears and phobias, depression, and feelings of guilt, shame and anger (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986). The external or more socially displayed responses may include: school phobias, incorrigibility, aggression towards self and others and delinquency (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986; James and Nasjelti, 1983; Sgroi, Porter, Blick, 1982).

The long term effects of child sexual abuse are just beginning to be understood. Most of the research in this area has been based on adult women who were sexually abused as children (Herman, 1981; Russell, 1986; Courtois, 1988; Bass and Davis, 1988). Some data on men who were abused as children is currently emerging (Longo, 1982; Groth, 1982; James and Nasjelti, 1983; Finkelhor, 1986). The most useful discussion of long term effects on boys and girls to date has come from Finkelhor and Browne (1986) who have

created a four part model to discuss the traumagenic nature of child sexual abuse. Their model includes: traumatic sexualization, stigmatization, betrayal and powerlessness.

Traumatic sexualization evokes several different dynamics. Of central importance is the way in which a child becomes confused about the meaning and content of close relationships. Rewarded for being sexual, deceived about the meaning of sexual behavior and sometimes disgusted by the acts s/he is asked to perform, a sexually abused child learns that the need to be connected to other people is not a relational need, but rather is a specific sexual need. This misperception may lead a child into what is perceived as "precocious sexuality." It may also create confusion about appropriate sexual activity and partners. The child could become sexually preoccupied or develop an aversion to both sexuality and intimacy (Berliner, 1985; Finkelhor and Browne, 1985).

Stigmatization is a second effect of sexual abuse. Referring to a process whereby the offender blames the child for the assault, denigrates the child's sense of self, and shames the victim for "participating" in sexual acts, stigmatization has profound effects on the child. It is as if the child's whole sense of self has been humiliated. This humiliation is exacerbated by the offender's desire to keep the abuse secret, which makes the child feel isolated and different from her or his peers.

Lowered self-esteem is another result of having a stigma attached to one's identity. If a child's family or friends react negatively to the disclosure of sexual abuse, the child's feelings of inferiority will be compounded. In more dramatic cases this may lead to problems such as self-mutilation, criminal activity, substance abuse, or suicide.

Betrayal occurs in sexual abuse cases whether the offender knows or is related to the child or whether the offender is a stranger. A trust has been violated, including a faith in the world as a benevolent place, and the child's long term ability to trust will likely be impaired (Finkelhor and Browne, 1985). The expectation that loved ones will and can protect the child is shattered. A pronounced sense of the world as a hostile place may make the child aggressive in a defensive way or may produce a severe clinging or dependency response. In either case the child's ability to form relationships where s/he may thrive is compromised.

Powerlessness is the final consequence of sexual abuse that Finkelhor and Browne discuss. In sexual abuse cases a child's psychological and bodily boundaries have been violated. These violations leave the child feeling vulnerable and often defenseless. If the child is unable to make others believe that the abuse is occurring, these feelings will become entrenched and the child may take on

an identity as a victim. Subsequent responses to victimization include two very different reactions. One is to become passive, fearful and anxious; the second is to become aggressive, bold and defensively assertive. Historically, these choices have been linked to gender, with girls more likely to doubt their efficacy and assume a subordinate stance, and boys more likely to need to be in control, sometimes turning their victimization into a need to dominate (Groth, 1985; Finkelhor and Browne, 1985).

Not all victims respond the same to sexual abuse, however, and even though popular depictions of sexually abused children define them as equally damaged, one study of clinical populations reported that only 20-40% of victims had some evident response to being abused (Tufts, 1984). Fewer than 20% of sexually abused children are believed to suffer from severe psychopathology (Finkelhor, 1986). A number of variables have been identified as significant predictors of the degree of subsequent trauma a child will experience. These include: relationship to the offender, number of offenders, age at onset of abuse, frequency and duration of abuse, type of sexual assault, amount of coercion and response to disclosure (Finkelhor, 1986; Russell, 1986; Gelinas, 1983; Herman, 1981; Butler, 1978).

Father-daughter and stepfather-daughter incest have frequently been cited as causing the most trauma to victims

because of both the symbolic and real nature of the relationship (Russell, 1986; Finkelhor, 1986; Gelinas, 1983; Herman, 1981). Although the correlation between fathers and stepfathers as offenders and severity of abuse is often cited, these same, as well as other researchers, have pointed to the fact that any offender, regardless of relationship, can cause trauma to the victim (Berliner, 1985; Sgroi, 1982). On the question of mother-son incest, as noted above Kempe and Kempe (1984) report that this is the most traumatic form of abuse. In her survey of incest victims, Russell found that female incest perpetrators were less coercive than male perpetrators and that they produced less trauma in their victims. Finkelhor (1979) in his pathbreaking study of sexual victimization, also found women perpetrators to cause less trauma. Regardless of the relationship between abuser and victim, when a child is sexually abused by more than one person during the course of growing up, the severity of the trauma is increased. Feelings of vulnerability and a subsequent inability to trust adults or older children are thought to account for the exacerbation of trauma (Finkelhor, 1986).

There is some evidence that the younger a child is at the onset of the abuse the more traumatic the experience (Kempe and Kempe, 1984). Prior to the age of 36 months children experience a psychological birth wherein they learn to both be attached to and separate from primary

caregivers (Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975). If abuse takes place during these formative years some believe that the process of psychic structuralization (i.e., the mechanisms by which one comes to establish an internal world and ways of interacting with the external world) can be more or less shattered. The most dramatic rupturing results in the formation of multiple personality disorders, which have recently been discovered to be more prevalent than previously assumed and to be connected to early and severe cases of child sexual abuse (Kluft, 1985). Finkelhor (1986) in his review of studies focusing on the age of onset and severity of trauma found more varied results. Others have noted that some children are able to overcome early abuse without severe long term consequences. Dubbed "resilient," these children commonly had one trusted adult in their environment who was able to counter the effects of the abuse (Shengold, 1979).

Frequency and duration of abuse have been examined often to see if they account for degree of trauma. While many clinicians believe that the number of times a child is abused and the number of days, weeks, months or years that the abuse lasts have significant consequences, the empirical results have been more mixed. Nevertheless, the fact that the clinical data have been consistent on this finding has been deemed as significant by Finkelhor, among others. It should be noted, however, that Russell has

found widespread negative mental health outcomes in cases of incest that occurred only once. In fact, contrary to many of the more publicized accounts of incest (Brady, 1979; McNarron and Morgan, 1982; Bass and Thornton, 1983) 43% of Russell's respondents reported only one incestuous experience yet 98% of the sample said that the experience had been traumatic (Russell, 1986).

Several studies have concluded that the most important factor for determining traumatic outcome was severity of the sexual assault. If a child experienced oral, anal and/or vaginal penetration it was much more likely that s/he would have persistent mental health problems than if no penetration occurred (Bagley and Ramsey, 1986; Gelinas, 1983; Russell, 1986). The profound violation of physical boundaries creates a sense of ongoing crisis for child victims similar to that reported by both male and female adult rape victims (Burgess and Holmstrom, 1979). A similar line of inquiry has examined the impact of aggression and force on victims. Finkelhor (1986) reports that the greater the force the worse the trauma. Many clinicians caution, however, that force does not need to be explicitly present for a child to be traumatized because the threat of force may already be implicitly present in the power imbalance found in adult-child relationships (Sanford, 1980).

A final set of variables that may predict the degree of trauma a sexually abused child may experience have to do with disclosure. In general, clinicians tend to believe that if a child tells that s/he is being abused there is a greater likelihood that the child will ultimately feel more empowered and less victimized. The child will also potentially break generations of silence which help to perpetuate sexual abuse (National Public Radio, 4/10/84; Herman, 1981; Sanford, 1980). Surveys of victims tend to be more ambiguous in their findings about the consequences of disclosure. Researchers at Tufts University (1984) found that those who disclosed at a slow pace felt the least conflicted about revealing sexual abuse. Others have found no correlation between disclosure and trauma (Finkelhor, 1979).

If a child does report being sexually abused to a parent and the parent reacts negatively to the disclosure, the child's trauma is increased. If the parent reacts with empathy the child's trauma is not alleviated because empathy alone does not remove the fact that the abuse occurred (Tufts, 1984). This finding is significant because most sexual abuse prevention programs teach that children should tell that they are being abused. The positive, cathartic consequences of disclosure have been taken for granted. One prevention specialist has cautioned against the uniform belief in disclosure (Conte, 1982). He

emphasized that disclosure may have negative effects on some children who either feel guilty for not telling or who suffer more abuse for the disclosure. These children appear burdened by both sexual abuse and a social climate which compels disclosure.

Prevention Programs

Because the effects of sexual abuse are defined as devastating, there has been a significant mobilization on the part of social workers, psychologists and others working with children to prevent abuse. These programs emphasize teaching children verbal and physical skills so they can thwart attackers (Colao and Hosansky, 1987). Almost all programs also advise children to reveal past abusive incidents. A number of ideas have become central to programs and literature about prevention. Common themes are: children have the right to control their own bodies; children have a right to "say no" to adults who touch them or want to touch them; children should trust their own feelings; and if a situation feels bad to the child s/he should leave (Wachter, 1983). If an adult tries to convince a child to keep secrets, the child should know that this means the adult is doing something wrong and the child should tell a trusted adult about the would-be secret. Secrets are usually differentiated from surprises

which are defined as fun and as things which are revealed to someone at an appropriate time.

In order to teach children these ideas many formats have been used. Theatre troupes, such as Illusion Theatre in Minnesota which pioneered this approach in 1979, present plays in which children are shown as victims of inappropriate touch, as victors in vanquishing a potential offender, and as past victims voicing their experiences and gaining help from trusted adults. Board games, like "Play it Safe with SASA" (SASA is a puppet), have been invented to introduce children to the idea of sexual abuse and ways of combatting it. Story and coloring books have also played a prominent role in the prevention field. Books such as Private Zones, Take Care with Yourself, No More Secrets for Me and It's O.K. to Say No!, all emphasize that adults may hurt children and children have an inherent right to be protected from these hurts or to be given the attention they need to recover from being abused.

Prevention programs also focus on adults, usually parents or educators, teaching them about sexual abuse and then focusing on how to talk to children about the topic and how to assess whether sexual abuse has occurred. Particular concern is sometimes focused on differences among children that might enhance their vulnerability. Linda Tschirhart Sanford's The Silent Children (1980), for instance, includes chapters on developmentally disabled

children, as well as physically handicapped children, children with single parents and children whose parents have been abused.

Although the idea of teaching prevention strategies seems straight-forward, in that most people would say that children have a right to protection from abusive adults, programs have faced a number of challenges in constructing their lessons. First, in communicating the idea that adults harm children and that they do not have a right to, prevention programs call into question the social relations which exist between adults and children. The norms of the culture dictate that children should obey adults and that adults wield a natural authority over children. Sexual abuse prevention programs tell children that some adults should not be obeyed. But which adults should be ignored? In essence this question is something like: how does one tell the good guys from the bad guys? Differentiating these two groups has been an ongoing task. Early prevention material focused almost exclusively on "stranger danger" which made answering this question easy. The good people were people one knew; the bad people were strangers. Simple in formation, this strategy, which has had its most successful application in the Missing Children's Movement (Best, 1987), had a major drawback. It ignored the fact that most children know the people who assault them. Material such as the film, "Red Light

People; Green Light People" which divided the world into people children could trust - doctors, police officers, teachers - and those who could not be trusted - people who might stop and ask for directions - taught children that adults who had legitimate professional authority over them would do no harm.

As empirical evidence emerged which refuted these claims, prevention programs began to shade their presentations more. Illusion Theatre offered performances which depicted people close to children, including relatives, as perpetrators of sexual abuse. Through this type of work varying portraits of sexual abuse emerged. Children were taught that many adults were capable of hurting them and that professional legitimacy or close relationships did not guarantee that adults were safe.

In addition to teaching children that adults can hurt them, prevention programs also have taught children how they are being harmed. What exactly is sexual abuse? While the answer to this question leads professionals to differentiate among various forms abuse can take and nuances of definitions, it is difficult to translate these subtleties into language that children can understand. The easiest and most adapted translation has been to talk about "appropriate" and "inappropriate" touch. Appropriate touch is touch that a child would welcome, such as a hug and touch that would not violate a child's "private parts"

(Adams and Fay, 1981). In constructing programs which relate this message, prevention specialists have usually side-stepped an essential question: is touch that is sexual always bad? How is a child to understand sexual play among peers or masturbation? While these are clearly difficult issues to address, ignoring them can lead to a confusion about what is sexual and what is abusive. Rather than a peripheral point, I believe that this distinction between sex and sexual abuse is a central undercurrent in the social construction of child sexual abuse. What is being debated here is the nature of children's sexuality and the boundary between adult and child sexual experiences. This concern with sexuality and the way in which it is affected by sexual abuse has been addressed in the burgeoning treatment literature.

Treatment Issues

The treatment of those involved in child sexual abuse is varied, but is almost always based on psychological principles. Pedophiles are frequently treated in behavior modification programs. Aversion therapy is given so that a perpetrator can alter his or her avowed sexual orientation to children. This treatment usually consists of some type of shock therapy and is based on a system of rewards and punishments. A perpetrator will be shown pictures of children and if s/he sexually responds, a shock will be

administered. Conversely, if a perpetrator responds to what is defined as an appropriate sexual partner, an adult woman or man, a reward will be administered (Crewdson, 1988).

Perhaps the most famous treatment program to emerge in the last few years is the "Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program" of Santa Clara County founded by Henry Giaretto. Begun in 1973, Giaretto's project is a court diversion program based on family system theory and is specifically organized to treat members of incestuous families. Initially offenders, and sometimes victims, will be removed from the home. Then, various family members are given psychotherapy in different configurations. For instance, if the daughter is the victim and the father the perpetrator the treatment will take place in the following units: mother/daughter; father/mother; father/daughter. Each dyad must focus on issues of betrayal, secrecy and violation. The point of therapy is to teach the victim that she is not to blame, to get the father to take responsibility for the incest, and to examine the mother's role in not protecting the daughter (Giaretto, 1982). The program has treated 20,000 cases of incest since its inception and, as a measure of success, claims that 90% of the families have been reunited after counseling (Crewdson, 1988).

Other treatment programs focus specifically on children who have recently been victimized or on adults who were abused as children. Most of these programs, like Harborview in Seattle or Incest Survivors Anonymous, a national organization offering treatment groups around the country, center on the victim being able to express through words, drawings, or play, what they have experienced. A priority is placed on breaking the silence around sexual abuse and creating an environment wherein victims can realize they did not cause their own abuse.

The most notable aspect of treatment programs is that they attempt to address the psychological impact and causes of abuse. Couched in the language of psychodynamic psychotherapy, these programs are dominated by clinicians who discuss sexual abuse as a loss of boundaries and appropriate roles between adults and children which produce profound psychological sequelae for the victims who may be beginning a lifetime of victimizing or victimization. At some point treatment issues blend with prevention concerns as professionals attempt to counteract what they perceive as a generational phenomenon.

Questions and Plan of Analysis

The definition of child sexual abuse as a social problem raises a number of issues for analysis. This dissertation will focus on the processes and mechanisms of

social construction. Specifically, it will examine the historical context in which sexual abuse was constructed, the groups which contributed to the "discovery," and the mechanisms which they used to advance their views. I will pursue these central questions: (1) How did the existence of contemporary social movements create a context for the construction of this specific problem? (2) How did the rethinking of the family as an institution and its changing structure influence various constructions about the sexual violence taking place in American homes? (3) How did the socially recognized split of reproduction from sexuality lead to discussions of sexual abuse not as a problem of genetic defects in future generations, but as an immediate, psychological problem for the victim?

The second central area of analysis focuses on the convergence and divergence of the constructions. Ways in which feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right championed, shaped, reflected and opposed various perspectives on child sexual abuse are key to its construction as a social problem. Important questions here are: (1) What view of child sexual abuse is advanced by each of the claimsmakers? (2) How do the constructionists discuss the causes of sexual abuse? (3) What do the "discoverers" of sexual abuse identify as the impact of abuse on the child and what type of repercussions do they project? (4) What role did the media play in establishing

particular views of sexual abuse? These questions will be examined from a contemporary point of view.

Part one, "Understanding Child Sexual Abuse: A View From the Field and From a Sociological Perspective" includes this chapter, which introduces the general perception of child sexual abuse as it has emerged since 1974, and Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 is a review of the social construction of social problems literature and an introduction to two central ideas which are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 - the media's roles in the construction process, and the attachment and refutation of stigma to those who have been abused. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the methodologies which I have used to gather my data, including field work, interviews and bibliographic and documentary research.

Part two, "Social Constructionism Applied to Child Sexual Abuse: The Creation of a Social Problem" includes Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 focuses on the social and intellectual contexts in which child sexual abuse began to be perceived as a social problem. Chapter 5 presents the four constructions of sexual abuse and the claimsmaking activities carried out by constructionists. Of particular importance here is an analysis of the psychological effects of sexual abuse on children, because it is this emphasis on psychological danger, I argue, which has characterized the most recent construction of sexual abuse and sets it apart

from prior historical discussions of the problem. Chapter 6 explores the processes and mechanisms of constructing a social problem. Here the claimsmakers central themes are explored, and the major construct of the four groups - the damaged child - is discussed.

Part three, "The Broader Cultural Context: Altering the Modern Construction of Childhood" is Chapter 7. This chapter looks at how child sexual abuse fits into a larger social framework. Specifically, it discusses the ways in which recent social problem movements which have focused on children - such as the missing children's movement, and the movement against child sexual abuse and physical abuse have contributed to a rethinking of childhood. Historical parallels are drawn between the Progressive Era's move to protect children from the vicissitudes of work, and from the social power of the world of money and the contemporary era's attempt to protect children from the dangers of sexual abuse, and from the privileges of adult social and sexual relations. The chapter also analyzes the role of sexual abuse prevention programs in providing children access to sexual information, information that in the case of sexually abused children had been identified as constituting a loss of innocence, and of childhood itself. As a form of socialization into sexuality, I identify prevention programs as a way of redrawing the boundaries between adults and children and ultimately of incorporating

ideas about sex into the reconstruction of childhood. The fact that discussions of sex are delivered in an encoded way, as part of a warning about danger, illustrates a continuing cultural ambivalence toward children and sexuality, an ambivalence which is reflected in the discourses created by the four claimsmakers.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZING A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Because child sexual abuse is most frequently discussed as a phenomenon that is protected by a conspiracy of silence, it is essential to understand the processes through which various voices came to frame the problem. This chapter is devoted to understanding how social problems are constructed through social activities. An exploration in the sociology of knowledge, the following pages examine a variety of concepts and literatures, including: social problem theory; the role of experts in drawing and keeping attention on sexual abuse; the place of the media in publicizing the problem; the history of childhood and child advocacy movements; the medicalization of deviance; the process of stigmatization; and the reclaiming of spoiled identities. Taken together, these literatures reveal the convergence of forces which contributed to the current understanding of children's sexual victimization.

Placing Social Constructionism in Context: Sociological Approaches to Social Problems

Since its inception American sociology has been concerned with social problems. This concern reflects the orientation which framed early sociologists' conception of their emerging discipline - a blend of progressive politics, social activism and scientific method (Lynd, 1939; Smelser, 1988). Over the past century six perspectives have developed within sociology as approaches to social problems. They include: social pathology, social disorganization, value conflict, deviant behavior, labeling and social constructionism (Rubington and Weinberg, 1988). Each of these paradigms has a particular view of society, of the causes of social problems and of potential solutions. Importantly, the approaches also incorporate differing views of what constitutes a social problem. Although this study is based on only one of these orientations, I will present a brief overview of the other approaches to social problems so that the distinctness of social constructionism is clear.

Social pathology, which emerged in the 1880s, was one of the earliest paradigms adopted by American sociologists. Using a medical model, social pathologists, like Rosenberg, Gerver and Howton (1964) who studied mass society in crisis, defined social problems as violations of moral expectations which were caused by failures in socialization. Education alone could ameliorate the

effects of a sick self or society. If education failed, the moral order would erode.

Following World War I and a large wave of immigration, social disorganization theory was born. This theory focuses on how social change alters people's expectations of society, thereby producing crises of normlessness and cultural atrophy. Because of the rapidity of the changes they caused, urbanization, industrialization and technological advances were all defined as capable of creating disequilibrium for individuals and for society. Thomas and Znaniecki's (1927) classic work on The Polish Peasant in Europe and America illustrates this point of view which argues that social problems are caused by a lack of stasis and cured by bringing the disorganized parts of the social system back into line. From 1918-1954, according to Rubington and Weinberg (1988), social disorganization was the most influential explanation for social problems.

Value conflict theory, initially found in the work of Frank (1925), Waller (1936) and Fuller and Myers (1941), gained popularity after World War II and looks at the ways in which social problems result from the collision of group values with social conditions. Through coalition building, negotiating, or power disputes, interest groups vie to have their views adapted by the majority. The lack of

value consensus is seen as generating social problems and is the root cause of social system failure.

The deviant behavior school of thought, gaining popularity in the 1950s, examines violations of normative expectations. Finding a model in Durkheim's 1897 study Suicide, these analyses argue that social problems occur because individuals' opportunities are blocked by society. As a result some people learn to be deviant in order to gain the rewards that others achieve through legitimate means. Deviance is identified as disruptive and harmful to social organization to the degree that it leads to the unravelling of the social fabric. Classic statements on this view first appeared in the work of Merton (1939) and Sutherland (1939). Proponents of deviant behavior theory believe that only by resocializing those who have accepted a deviant role and by creating legitimate avenues for achievement will social problems be alleviated.

Beginning in the 1960s the labeling perspective started to focus on social problems as processes of social interaction and reaction. Growing out of the theoretical work of Mead (1934) and Schutz (1962), labeling theorists believe what becomes problematic depends on one's social location and his/her ability to define others, or to be defined, as deviant. Those who hold the power to label gain advantages through the very process of definition. Those who are labeled either move to secondary deviance-

accepting an identity as a deviant individual - or they seek to alter the label by changing their interactions. Howard Becker's book The Outsiders (1963) explored deviance as a process of social interaction and influenced all those who wrote after him, including Erikson (1964), Goffman (1963) and Scheff (1966).

Social constructionism shifts the study of social problems to a different plane and focuses attention on how some social situations come to be identified as problematic while others are ignored (Schneider, 1985). It is based on the assertion that although social organization inevitably gives rise to troublesome conditions, these conditions do not merit the label of social problem until the activities of groups and individuals create that specific definition (Hazelrigg, 1986). As objective facts which cause hardship, inflict harm, or create upheaval - poverty, crime, or alcoholism, for example - social problems may be experienced solely as private troubles (Mills, 1967). Until these troubles are translated into public issues, their social nature remains obscure, cloaked in the silence of individual experience and shrouded in the loneliness of victimization.

According to Spector and Kitsuse (1987:75), leading proponents of the constructionist perspective, social problems are "activities of individuals or groups making assertions or grievances and claims with respect to some

putative conditions." In this view, members of a society are seen as agitating for the recognition of a specific problem. A problem is given a vocabulary, boundaries, a framework for understanding causes and effects and proposed solutions by "claimsmakers" who help construct it. The conditions which are described and appear to have lives and properties of their own, do not adhere naturally to the problem. They are the products of the claimsmakers (Blumer, 1971). In later stages of the natural history of a social problem these vocabularies, boundaries and frameworks will appear to take on lives of their own and will be used to legitimate continued attention to the problem. At the start, however, they are used to draw attention to a situation a number of people feel is harmful.

The Consensus and Conflict Models of Social Construction

Blumer (1971) was one of the first to identify the stages by which claimsmakers construct social problems. In his article, "Social Problems as Collective Behavior" Blumer posits a five stage process which includes: the emergence of a social problem; the legitimation of the problem; mobilization of action with regard to the problem; and formation of an official plan of action; and, transformation of the plan. Blumer's conceptualization is helpful in that it focuses attention on the action of

groups and individuals which shape the perception of social problems and advances traditional discussions which had examined objective social conditions as the causes of social problems. Yet, in focusing attention on the collective process of construction, Blumer presents a unilinear, static, model. He sees social problems not as the result of contested actions or discourses, but as a reflection of consensual processes.

Spector and Kitsuse (1987) laud Blumer for his emphasis on social activities, and criticize him for ignoring the complexities and struggles inherent in definitional contests. In place of Blumer's five stages, Spector and Kitsuse propose a four stage model. Stage one is the process by which a private trouble becomes a public issue. Groups with large memberships, access to money, resources and organizations are more likely to be successful. Contested definitions appear, during this stage representing the activities of opposing groups. As the claims for the problem are documented, statistics, narratives and reports will be marshalled in alternate ways by groups contending for public adaptation of their version of the problem. This study is an examination of this first stage.

Stage two is entered when state agencies and other powerful institutions formally recognize the problem. Spokespeople for the problem are accorded recognition as

"experts." As the problem becomes increasingly owned by particular groups and agencies, a bureaucratized approach to the issue is instituted and the construction of the problem moves into the next stage.

During stage three official organizations begin to react to the ways in which the problem has been addressed. Changes in the management of the problem may occur or alternatives to existing policies may be proposed. As a problem moves into the fourth stage, individuals become increasingly disgruntled with the official mechanisms which have been arranged around the problem. Established channels are bypassed as challenges to existing interpretations of the problem become more powerful.

Spector and Kitsuse's model has become an essential framework for understanding how social problems are the products of individuals' activities. Their focus on the conflictual aspects of social problem definitions speaks directly to the interests of those who become claimsmakers and the ways in which those individuals become vested in the problems they seek to uncover. Following Spector and Kitsuse, numerous studies have been conducted which embrace the constructionist view. Varied in topics, these studies have focused on such diverse issues as: alcoholism (Wiener, 1981; Schneider, 1978); battering (Wharton, 1982; Tierney, 1982); rape (Scully and Marolla, 1984); the environment (Schoenfeld, Meier and Griffin, 1979); coffee

drinking (Troyer and Markle, 1984); hyperkinesis (Conrad, 1975); and epilepsy (Schneider and Conrad, 1983). Each of these studies examines the process by which a problem is identified and the social factors which create a context for claimsmaking activities. In the case of hyperkinesis, for example, Conrad (1975) argues that the possibility of labeling certain behaviors as diagnostically indicative of a medical problem called hyperkinesis, was predicated upon the activities of physicians, schools, drug companies and the federal government. Ultimately through the cooperation and conflict of these groups a social problem was named.

Similarly, and especially pertinent to this study because of its focus, Pfohl (1977) describes the process of discovering the physical abuse of children as a product of particular social forces which allowed for the creation of the "battered child syndrome." The social organization of medicine was the most significant contributor to this construction because it was pediatric radiologists, a low status, peripheral group with much to gain from the labeling of a social problem, who were the first to identify the physical abuse of children as a problem. Pediatric radiologists became experts on the topic of battered children, capable, through the power of X-ray technology, of defining certain injuries as the result of battering and others as caused by accidents. Although Pfohl does not pursue this issue, an argument can be made

that from these definitions emerge judgments about the social relationships of parents and their children, and clues about how American culture differentiates between legitimate forms of discipline and violence. As will be discussed in later chapters, similar judgments about parent/child relationships and the difference between intimacy and "appropriate" and "inappropriate" touch became a focus of activity for those trying to delineate the parameters of child sexual abuse.

Experts as Claimsmakers

The significance of experts' claims is not limited to the case of hyperkinesis or battered children. Experts, often from diverse backgrounds, emerge in the context of all social problems (Schneider, 1985). They may include those who speak officially for agencies, members of professional associations, representatives of protest groups and individuals who directly experience the condition being identified as problematic (Spector and Kitsuse, 1987). The status of expert is conferred through the process of claimsmaking. Thus, not only are experts "discovering" a problem - the idea of discovery being a claim itself - they are part of its construction. Expertise about a social problem gives a person the power to introduce interventions and propose solutions.

In their discussion of the battered women's movement Loeske and Cahill (1985) point out that experts are part of the "knowledge class" whose role is to define, interpret and manage problems experienced by victims. An important aspect of these activities is the creation of a new clientele for experts' services. In the case of battered women, experts have sought to explain why women become victims, to explore the rhythms of battering and to establish a set of patterns for interpreting the reasons why women stay in battering relationships. Women who are battered are defined as needing a variety of services from experts, particularly shelter, counseling and child care (Schecter, 1983). One additional service which experts provide battered women and other "victims" is a language for framing the various dimensions of a putative condition.

Language as an Activity in Social Problem Construction

Vocabularies of social problems are created and contested from all perspectives. The words used to identify a problem indicate the positions, politics and world view of a group. Joel Best's (1987) examination of the missing children's movement uses Steven Toulmin's categories of rhetorical analysis as a mechanism for understanding how the claim of a social problem is an activity of persuasion and part of social construction. From the specifics of the missing children's movement, Best

builds a general rhetorical model which makes persuasion central to claimsmaking activities. His contribution is unique because most social construction research has emphasized the substance of given issues, but has not examined how that substance has been expressed. Language has been treated as an objective condition (Best, 1987).

According to Best, claimsmakers demand that a particular version of social problems be accepted by making grounds statements. These statements consist of definitions about a problem's domain, thereby setting the boundaries of the problem and revealing the claimsmakers' orientation towards the problem, and also shows how claimsmakers see their audiences, which may be identified as those who are converted, hostile, or persuadable (Best, 1987). From these considerations Best creates two rhetorical categories, a rhetoric of rectitude and a rhetoric of rationality. Rhetorics of rectitude appear early in the natural history of a social problem and focus on interpretations of a condition. After the problem has been legitimated, claimsmakers use a rhetoric of rationality, which focuses on social policy.

The rhetorical analysis which Best offers is significant because it makes language part of the activity which is engaged in when social problems are being defined. An example of this in the case of child sexual abuse is found in the varied labels which have become attached to

those who have been abused. Those who speak from a child protectionist perspective or from the New Right refer to "victims" of sexual abuse. Feminists, and increasingly clinicians who treat adults, use the term "survivor." "Victim" and "survivor" communicate different views of the meaning of sexual abuse. To be victimized is to be helpless and acted upon; it also means that one is not responsible for whatever abuse has occurred. The term survivor, evocative of the Holocaust, communicates that one has experienced great danger and endured it. Using the term survivor depicts strength and personal power. The words incorporate competing definitions of the problem of sexual abuse which will be discussed later in this analysis, but what is important to note here is that the choice of term reveals much about the underlying assumptions of the claimsmakers and their relationship to the problem being defined. The mass media, which carry communications and messages, also play a central role in claimsmaking.

The Media as Claimsmakers

Newspapers, television and films have become major actors in the definition and packaging of social problems. Blumer (1971) has stated that the media provide social problems with legitimacy and an avenue for public discussion. Gaye Tuchman (1978) has also discussed ways in

which the media mold ideas about social problems. Tuchman argues that newspapers or television are rarely among the first to identify a social problem because they tend to take the social world for granted and do not question existing institutions or social relations. Media do play a key role, however, in the framing and carrying of cultural messages.

Framing, as Goffman (1963) noted, turns seemingly amorphous occurrences into recognizable events, thereby creating order, context and meaning. It also provides interpretation and thus structures knowledge. In the media, information is organized in ways which appear natural - as if the presentation grows inevitably out of the events themselves and is not imposed by social actions or interpretations. The media's role--particularly newspapers, news magazines and made-for-television movies--in framing child sexual abuse as a social problem, is part of two larger media processes: the documentation and depiction of family violence in general and the presentation and portrayal of childhood.

Newspapers have had a leading voice in introducing the idea of family violence, and therefore child sexual abuse, to the general public. The New York Times, for example, published 27 articles on child sexual abuse in 1975, 153 in 1980 and 257 in 1985. Increased coverage of the topic, regardless of actual incidence statistics, created the

impression that child sexual abuse was becoming more prevalent and therefore needed to be identified as a serious social problem. Like other newspapers The New York Times coverage not only reported statistics about sexual abuse, but also followed specific cases such as that of Cheryl Pierson, a local high school student who hired a classmate to kill her father who had been sexually violating her for years. These types of stories contained complex events, characterized by danger, violence and at least one identifiable victim and villain. They also illustrated the point that child sexual abuse was reputed to occur in white, middle class homes - key factors in promoting a certain definition of a social problem.

Similar formats have been followed in news magazines such as Newsweek (1983) and Time (1984), which have done a number of cover stories, as well as feature articles, on children's sexual victimization. Like newspapers, the news magazines have looked at these children from statistical and anecdotal perspectives. They have been particularly enamored of sensational cases where the number of victims is large and the perpetrators are respectable citizens. For example, the McMartin pre-school case, where 350 children reported sexual abuse by their teachers and the Jordan, Minnesota case, where 24 parents were arrested for sexually abusing and torturing their children, received much attention, because they challenged the role and status

expectations the general population hold about teachers and parents (Crewdson, 1988).

Made-for-television movies have been an additional vehicle for providing information about intimate violence, especially battering and child abuse. The most well known films on family violence - "The Burning Bed" and "Something About Amelia" each had massive audiences. Both were presented as entertainment and as education. The non-fictional "Burning Bed" told the story of Francine Hughes, her years of victimization, her killing of her husband and her acquittal of murder charges in court. "Amelia" was a fictional portrayal of a young, suburban, white girl, sexually abused by her father. The film focused on Amelia's disclosure of the incest, subsequent family conflict and ultimate family reunion through the therapeutic intervention of Parent's United.

These films, and the multitudes of those like them, serve to normalize family violence and give audiences a framework for understanding the dynamics of the problem as they are perceived by the writers. Made-for-television movies have become a conduit for creating awareness about social problems. Recent films have covered such topics as: teenage suicide, bulimia, homelessness and poverty. A powerful force, these films in their initial airing are often tied to public service campaigns so that those who are affected by a specific problem can get help from a

national or local hotline. An example of public receptivity to these efforts is that after the showing of "Amelia," a statewide hotline for child abuse and neglect in Michigan, whose phone number had been displayed on the screen at the end of the film, received over 100 calls-many from women over 50 who had not previously revealed that they had been sexually abused. Crewdson (1988) noted the same pattern occurring across the country.

Taken together, the efforts of newspapers, magazines and television films have served to construct views of sexual violence within families. These views are often simple, presenting quick solutions to complex problems in several pages or hours. Nevertheless, the fact that these problems are being openly depicted in the media means that the silence about sexual abuse has been replaced with a number of discourses and that the media have become active participants in this process. The media's influence has not been limited to sexual abuse or family violence, however. It has also extended to and actively shaped discussions of children and childhood.

The Media's Construction of Childhood

During the past four decades infant and child development have become a focus of psychological research and popular interest (Mahler, Pine and Bergman 1975). Attention has primarily been paid to the processes which

children undergo on their way to achieving adulthood. This conceptualization reveals an adultcentric view of childhood as a means to an end (Speier, 1976; Thorne and Lauria, 1986). It also rests on the idea that children go through stages of growth, developing gradually and gaining more information and knowledge as their ability to think abstractly increases (Piaget, 1954). The content of these stages and the proper timing of child development have been disseminated in the academic and popular press, as well as by television. In many ways, however, the electronic media in general, and television in particular, have ceased to merely chronicle the events of childhood. They have altered the ways in which children experience stages of growth and the ways in which adults define children within these stages.

Many of the early discussions of television's influence on children focused on violence. Much of the recent analysis of the media's impact on children has been more global in orientation and has been focused on the perception that childhood is being distorted or destroyed by the medium. Arguments about the end of childhood, such as Packard's Our Endangered Children (1983), Postman's The Disappearance of Childhood (1982) and Elkind's The Hurried Child (1981), are like those concerning the "death of the family," and fail to take into account the fact that shifting historical contexts yield varying experiences of

social institutions, such as family, or social categories, such as age.

Part of the shifting terrain of childhood has been the invention of computers, video games and the continuing innovations of television which have given children access to knowledge that historically had been controlled by adults. Boundaries between adult/child "informational worlds" have been broken down by media which do not restrict audience (Meyerowitz, 1985). Through this process children have become increasingly exposed to the previously hidden, backstage world of adults. A part of this world includes sex and violence. As Joshua Meyerowitz (1985) has pointed out:

> Young children are witness to "facts" that contradict social myths and ideals even before they learn about the myths and ideals in school. Children see politicians disgraced, police officers and teachers on strike for higher pay, parents accused of battering their children. Through television news and entertainment, children learn too much about the nature of "real" life to believe the ideals their teachers try to teach them. The result is not only that they grow up fast, but that they grow up having an image of society and roles that differs markedly from that held by children of earlier generations.

If children today are growing up with different views of society and parents than those their predecessors held, they are also coming of age with complicated views of what childhood itself encompasses. A variety of images of children exist in the media today among them: child as prodigy; child as innocent; child as victim, child as

technological product and child as consumer. Although some of these images are new and reflect modern post-capitalist concepts and technologies, many resonate with older views of childhood.

The Historical Construction of Childhood

Childhood as a world separate and demarcated from adulthood began to appear in the early middle ages (Aries, 1962). Prior to that time children were considered "miniature adults," with access to some of the liberties and choices now relegated to adulthood. The initial separation of children from adults began as an upper class phenomenon and later spread to the middle, working and lower classes. While the idea of childhood as a separate sphere was emerging, debates over the "true nature" of children, and therefore the content of childhood raged.

In the seventeenth century United States, children were characterized as inherently sinful, but potentially redeemable, by parental socialization. By the 1860s children were seen as the redeemers of the culture and childhood itself started to be viewed as a special, unique time of life (Wishy, 1968). The early 20th century saw the emergence of an ideology which depicted children as precious resources, necessary to insure the future of society. The idea that children were individuals and that

childhood exists an entitlement became central to the social relations of the past century (Takanishi, 1978).

Support for the emerging view that children deserved to be separate from adults because of their special characteristics was based on the idea of childhood innocence. Initially introduced by Christianity and gaining prominence in sixteenth century Europe, the ideological view of children as innocents has been institutionalized in contemporary America. Innocence is primarily born of ignorance - both intellectual and sexual. Ignorance about sex extended both to children's experience of their own bodies - which led to negative sanctions against masturbation - and to sexual relationships with others (DeMause, 1974). The association of innocence with lack of sexual knowledge meant that <u>any</u> sexuality was equated with sexual abuse (Calderone, 1984). Thus innocence became a focal point not only for conceptualizing and idealizing childhood, and of differentiating it within the life cycle, but also became a platform for those advocating child protection (Jackson, 1982).

Child Advocacy Movements

Beginning in 1875 children became the focus of child saving movements in the United States (Platt, 1969). Initially emerging from feminist concerns, upper class charity organizations and the anti-prostitution and anti-

alcohol campaigns of the time, these movements focused on cruelty to children. In the Progressive Era, as feminism waned, the idea of child cruelty was refined (Gordon, 1988). Physical abuse, sexual abuse and paid labor became leading targets of reform as social workers became the foremost child savers. Concerned with the decaying structure of family life, social workers sought to protect children from sexual assault by strangers, poverty resulting from unemployment and other forms of social disorganization.

The premise behind child saving movements of this period was that children needed to be saved because they embodied the future of society. Numerous campaigns were launched to ensure that children would be free to play, to learn, to be nurtured, to be healthy and to not work. Professions and organizations were created to protect children's interests including: Public Health; Social Work; Social Welfare; Pediatrics; Child Welfare; and Child Development (Takanishi, 1978; Gordon, 1988). Through the convergence of beliefs about children's innocence and the development of institutional power to protect it, was born the idea that children have the right to childhood - an idea that was initially deployed in the battle to eliminate child labor and later used to escalate the war against child sexual abuse.

Children's labor was at the center of contention in the historical reconstruction of childhood from the 1870s to the 1930s. Part of a larger process of sentimentalization which affected both the family and childhood, this transition saw children move from being economically productive individuals with a limited emotional value to being emotionally priceless, but economically unproductive (Zelizer, 1985). The emergence of the sacred child and social reforms aimed at establishing and protecting this sanctity meant that the state began to assume a major role in organizing childhood (Platt, 1969).

During the depression of the 1930s, state involvement in regulating childhood diminished. Emphasis on family violence as a whole also dwindled during this period (Gordon, 1988). Following World War II social awareness of issues pertaining to childhood was almost absent. Psychiatric diagnoses replaced social activism. Interestingly, incest was one form of family violence that was addressed. Defined as a form of emotional neglect, incest was "discovered" to be a problem in seductive mother-child relationships. The role of professionals during this period was to protect the privacy of the nuclear family and to assure conformity to its values.

Social Construction and the Medicalization of Deviance

Parallel to the literature on social construction and important for understanding how child sexual abuse has come to be conceptualized is the body of literature on the medicalization of deviance. The medical model has been significant in shifting the view of deviance from sin through crime to sickness.

As a way of managing deviance, medicine locates problems within the individual, and sees them as caused by some physiological or organic condition. Blame for deviant behavior, such as incest, is placed on a person who must be treated by medicine, particularly psychiatry, in order to get better. This medical treatment is usually seen as necessary for both the perpetrator and the abused.

Conrad and Schneider (1982) have created a sequential model for understanding deviance, and explaining the development of medical designations placed on deviants. First, a behavior is identified as deviant without a medical model imposed on it. Later medical models are employed and replace designations which have been used by earlier experts. In the second--the prospecting stage--medical discovery itself occurs. This usually takes place through medical journals. The discovery of the "battered child syndrome," for instance, occurred within the pages of The New England Journal of Medicine (Nelson, 1984). While this attention legitimates the problem from a medical

perspective, it does not necessarily insure public discovery. Claimsmaking, the third stage, must occur in order for the problem to be discovered by the public.

As an activity, claimsmaking is most important in the emergence of new views of deviance, party because it is in this stage that a designation becomes the province of a particular medical specialty. Other claimsmakers vie with medical personnel in shaping the definition of a social problem. The media may also play a role in this process, although Conrad and Schneider have pointed out that television and the press are less central to the dynamics of deviance than to the emergent phases of social problems.

The fourth stage of deviance designations is legitimation of the medical view. Here medicine is given the "deed" to the problem and may step in as a social control agent for the state. This process clearly occurs in child abuse cases where physicians are mandated reporters. Finally, in the fifth stage the medical designation of deviance is institutionalized through bureaucracies, like the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect, which give support to medicine, as well as receiving support from it. Some problems achieve codification, becoming part of medical and legal classifications, including psychiatry's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual.

Social problems which affect children have been particularly prone to medicalization. Two features of childhood as it is constructed in contemporary U.S. culture make it more likely that the power of medicine will be invoked either when children perform acts which are considered deviant or when they are victims of deviants. These two features are innocence and dependence, characteristics which allegedly make children vulnerable to being led astray. Because of their relative powerlessness, children are identified as in need of protection from the world of adults, a world which is marked by access to power, money and sexuality.

Platt (1969) has chronicled the process that occurred during the Progressive Era when child savers used the juvenile courts to protect children from danger. The court served as an amalgam of medical and legal interests, guiding children with the help of the so-called psychological sciences. As medicine, particularly psychiatry, has become increasingly important in defining deviance, models of psychopathology have achieved hegemony. Conrad and Schneider (1982) have pointed out that a society which is ideologically committed to protecting children facilitates the adoption of medical models which are also "protective and preventive." The interests of medicine and the interest of children are viewed as coinciding and

children's needs are incorporated into medicine's expanding boundaries.

Institutional Power to Stigmatize

In addition to the power to protect and defend, medicine, as well as religion and law, has the institutional power to impose definitions which stigmatize. Stigma, in the case of child sexual abuse, adheres both to victims and perpetrators who are perceived to have "spoiled identities." Goffman (1963), in his classic work Stigma, described the discredited - who bear visible signs of stigmatization--and the discreditable--who show no visible stigmata. Most people who have been sexually abused or who abuse have discreditable stigmas. Their task is to manage information about their identities and experiences. Many choose secrecy as a means of managing stigma.

Simmel (1950) has described secrecy as a way to conceal information, and create boundaries around events, behaviors, knowledge and feelings which are identified as morally untenable by a culture. Additionally, Warren and Laslett (1977) have pointed out that secrecy is more frequently employed by less powerful individuals such as the institutionalized, the elderly, the mentally and physically ill, the morally stigmatized and children. When sexual abuse occurs, many children are coerced into secrecy by those who abuse them, but not all victims remain

silent. There are levels of secrecy and places where disclosure may take place. The idea of the secret in relationship to stigma, however, has become a central motif in the feminist and clinical discourses on sexual abuse.

Feminists view the secrecy about sexual victimization as one aspect of a patriarchal culture which has silenced the voices of women and children who have experienced gender and generational violence (Rush, 1980; Butler, 1978). Breaking a "conspiracy of silence" became a rallying cry, and a strategy for empowerment for feminists working in the areas of rape and battering. Concern with the silence which is imposed on the victims of violence-initially by individual perpetrators and then by society-was part of a broader feminist agenda which focused on the oppression of silence and the necessity of naming. Given vivid voice by such writers and activists as Adrienne Rich (1977), the issue of naming was identified first in phenomenological terms. By breaking the intellectual and ontological hegemony of men, women could discover what it meant to be women, not simply in opposition to men, but in their own right. The dynamics of naming also included an emphasis on action which was intended to move women beyond passivity (Lorde, 1980). Learning to act on their own behalf, women could escape rape attempts, leave battering relationships, and speak about sexual abuse.

From a set of different concerns, clinicians have also addressed the issues of secrecy and stigmatization. As psychotherapists these constructionists focused on the negative psychological effects of keeping sexual abuse silent (Gelinas, 1983; Bass and Davis, 1988; Meiselman, 1978, Giaretto, 1982). In fact some clinicians have identified the secrecy surrounding abuse as potentially more damaging than the abuse itself. The damage is the result of psychological consequence of stifling information about events that hurt individuals and families (Courtois, 1988).

Like feminists who worked out of a broader framework, linking secrecy and naming, clinicians' analyses also had a second level of interpretation. Schooled in Freudian thought, generations of clinicians were taught that clients' descriptions of child sexual abuse were stories about frustrated wishes and desires, not actual accounts of assaults. Freud (1953) theorized that as part of normal development processes children longed for sexual contact with the parent of the opposite gender. He called this process the Oedipal complex. As a theory, which was a basis for clinical practice, the Oedipal complex created a secrecy about sexual abuse, obscuring the existence of coercive sexual relationships between children and adults. To interpret their clients' reports as true incidents of incest and abuse, contemporary clinicians had to challenge

the dominant professional interpretation about retrospective reports of sexual abuse.

Recently, Freudian theory has been challenged from several avenues. Florence Rush (1977), Jeffrey Masson (1984), and Alice Miller (1984), have been leading voices in questioning Freud's theory of childhood development and children's experience of sexual assault. Rush, a feminist and a social worker, viewed Freud as a patriarch, silencing those less powerful than himself. She believed that Freud ignored the claims of his female patients out of sexism. Masson, a psychoanalyst and former director of the Freud archives, examined Freud's motives for creating the Oedipal complex and depicted the founder of psychoanalysis as a moral coward, with an ambivalent relationship to his own father which blinded him to the realities and impact of sexual assault. Miller, a psychoanalyst, argued that Freud could not tolerate the idea that the narratives of sexual assault he was hearing were true and so created a theory which treated the accounts as fantasies. Miller accuses Freud of instigating and theoretically institutionalizing nearly a century of psychotherapeutic secrecy about child sexual abuse, thereby contributing to the stigma which came to dominate the topic.

Due to the stigma imposed by this convergence of forces, many whose lives were touched by sexual abuse and its potentially damaging impact on identities and

reputations, attempted to manage its disclosure. Management of a spoiled identity, however, depends on many factors, including those who tell, those who hear, and the setting in which the information is disclosed. There are people and places where one feels either safe or endangered in revealing stigmatizing information. From Goffman's perspective, the stigmatized individual is in a perpetual reactive state deciding when, if ever, to acknowledge his/her failing. The stigmatized are viewed as primarily powerless, their only hope at overcoming their condition is to become a "hero of adjustment." According to Goffman, heroes of adjustment are those who are able to transcend their stigma and carry on as if they were "normal." Their normalcy becomes an achieved characteristic which they must always strive to retain. Having violated social expectations by carrying a hidden, discreditable stigma, deviants move beyond the problem only by negating undesirable traits which make them different.

Goffman's view of stigma captures a particular moment in social history - the 1950s - and reflects the periods broader sociological concern with modes of conformity. As a way of thinking about stigma Goffman's work is helpful because it delineates and then expands the concept. He provides a description of types of stigma, but more importantly he allows readers to see stigma as a series of perspectives one holds in relationship to normalcy, as

opposed to fixed and rigid categories which some always occupy and others never do. In his work, however, Goffman fails to account for a perspective which the stigmatized could potentially take if they saw stigma not as a failing, but as a source of strength - that of expert and advocate on their own behalf.

Identity Politics: Redefining Stigma

The popular social movements of the 1960s and 70s provided a forum for a new type of politics. Personal conditions which might have caused one to be stigmatized as sick (homosexuality, for example) or crippled (physically challenged) became seen as sources of strength and identity. Instead of handling stigma so that normals could be protected and could react in a contained, socially acceptable manner, the stigmatized began to "speak bitterness." Management of difference turned to proclamations of pride, and the politics of coming out was born.

John Kitsuse (1980) and Rene Anspach (1979) have each written about the process by which deviants seize the power to define themselves. Key to this redefinition is a refusal to accept labels which have been created by majority groups. Kitsuse has pointed out that:

> ...deviants have come out to challenge conventional conceptions and judgments of their conduct, to question "expert" assessments of their "disabilities," "handicaps" and devaluation

> of their various conditions and their attendant prescriptions for corrective treatment, and to publicly demand their right to equal access to institutional resources. Through such activities deviants have become some of the most active and visible practitioners of the art of social problems in the 1970s (Kitsuse, 1980).

By focusing on the demands that the stigmatized make for legitimacy, Kitsuse expressed a profound alteration in the power dynamics between deviants and normals. Long relegated to groups about whom claims could be made, the stigmatized now became claimsmakers. This is not to imply that "identity pride," as it is called in the new literature on homosexuality (Altman, 1982), began in the 1970s. Clearly, deviant groups have previously formed pockets of resistance to the hegemonic definitions of majority groups. Groups like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, for example, which provided homosexual men and women with gathering places, literature and a feeling of community beginning in the 1950s, tried to shift people's perceptions of the homosexual from that of pervert to that of an individual with a different and potentially equal sexual orientation (D'Emilio, 1983). But even though organizations such as these were instrumental in altering homosexuals' conception of themselves, they did not demand that the majority group relinquish their views, and thus, homosexuality remained in the shadow of stigma.

In the 1960s and 1970s various stigmatized groups perceptions of themselves and the conditions they endured

began to change (Altman, 1982; Shilts, 1987). No longer simply the victims of misfortunes, these minority groups began to identify the conditions they experienced as injustices. In this process of redefinition, the stigmatized began to lobby for recognition of themselves not in spite of their differences, but because of their centrality.

Writing about the physically disabled and former mental patients Renee Anspach (1979) has examined ways in which identity politics grew out of the social movements of the 1960s and challenged pre-existing sociological frameworks of deviance. Anspach maintains that political action can create mechanisms whereby the concept of the self is continually recreated. For those who have been labeled deviant or defective, political activism based on identity moves them past a "politics of pity" and towards self-definition (Anspach, 1979; Ritter, 1976). In the place of pity those who embrace identity politics demand to control definitions of themselves and their experiences. Accommodation to normals is repudiated, stigmatization is blamed on society, and the formally stigmatized begin to identify with other oppressed minority groups.

> Thus madness emerges not as affliction, but as creative rebellion, and the disabled emerge not as passive victims, but as prophets, visionaries and revolutionaries (Anspach, 1979).

Anspach credits the ability of former mental patients and the disabled to impose their self-definition on the

perceptions of normals to two factors: political actions and changes in language. Political action on the part of the stigmatized directly confronts normative conceptions of the powerless and victimized. By formulating a politics of resistance, the stigmatized enter into what Anspach labels "phenomenological warfare" with normals. A significant part of this warfare is a struggle over language. To the degree that language is capable not only of expressing, but of structuring reality, it is a central terrain in the battle of the stigmatized to reshape perceptions of themselves and their conditions. This is evident in any number of social movements and social problems. The gay liberation movement insisted that the term gay be used instead of homosexual; the black power movement stated that, "Black is Beautiful" and demanded that the term black be used instead of Negro or colored; more recently those with full blown AIDS have urged that the phrase, "People With AIDS" be adapted in place of AIDS patients or victims. Far from simple terms, these words express an ontological stance and a refusal to be externally defined.

John Kitsuse (1980) has identified the rejection of external definitions as tertiary deviance. As discussed earlier, sociologists understand primary deviance as the process of labeling an activity as deviant. Secondary deviance occurs when a person who has been labeled takes on the definition and acts deviant. Tertiary deviance

occurs when an individual actively rejects external views of contamination and creates new views of the self. Kitsuse writes:

> ...we might propose the concept of "tertiary deviation" to refer to the deviant's confrontation, assessment and rejection of the negative identity embedded in secondary deviation and the transformation of that identity into a positive and viable self-conception. As an extension of the natural history of deviant lives outlined by Lemert, the concept of tertiary deviance would direct us to investigate questions of how it is possible for the stigmatized, the ridiculed and despised to confront their own complicity in the maintenance of their degraded status, to recover and accept the suppressed anger and rage as their own, to transform shame into guilt, guilt into moral indignation and victim into activist.

The ability of women who had been raped and battered to go through the process described by Kitsuse paved the way for adults who had been sexually abused as children to reevaluate their experiences and led to the initial construction of the social problem.

Summary

This chapter has presented an introduction to social constructionist views and an overview of the particular social forces which have led to the definition of child sexual abuse as a social problem. In the next chapter I will elaborate the various methods I have used to understand these processes.

CHAPTER 3

DECODING CONSTRUCTIONS: METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

Writing about the practice of ethnographic research Geertz (1973:9) stated:

> ...what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to... Right down to the factual base, the hard rock, insofar as there is any, of the whole enterprise, we are already explicating; and worse explicating explications. Winks upon winks upon winks.

Geertz has clearly grasped the elusive nature of studying social realities and activities. The study of social constructions adds to the problems of doing research because of the layers of meanings, shifting definitions, the activities and conflicts that must be decoded.

Undertaking the study of child sexual abuse I was acutely aware of three methodological issues or problems. First, in analyzing the construction of a social problem I was constructing my own version of the constructions- "winks upon winks." Because of the difficulties in deciphering the levels of construction, I needed a research

method or methods that would honor the complexity of the topic and allow me access to a number of perspectives.

A second issue in choosing a method was related to the topic itself. Child sexual abuse, unlike poverty or crime, seems to be a problem that everyone agrees is clearly recognizable as an objective condition. Most people when asked agree that the sexual abuse of children is wrong; adults should never have sex with children and when they do it is a problem. This view is held not only by the general public or victims, but even by perpetrators of sexual abuse (Groth, 1985). Given the consensus of opinion, sexual abuse appears as a single coherent issue which morally outraged citizens can agree upon and organize against. This definition, however, hides the complexities and contradictions inherent in the constructions of the problem. What is missing is the subjective actions which create the idea and image of objectivity. The very act of speaking about a problem is a construct, full of linguistic choices, moral judgments and metaphorical analyses (Spector and Kitsuse, 1987). I needed methodologies that would allow me to gather information about the subjective claims of those who were identifying sexual abuse as a social problem.

A third issue in studying child sexual abuse came from the silence which was identified as pervading the problem. How could I study a problem whose two main characteristics

were described as silence and secrecy (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980)? How could I gain access to a phenomenon which was identified as invisible? As I began to gather information about sexual abuse I realized that the words "secret" and "silent" appeared in the titles of numerous books and articles such as: Conspiracy of Silence (Butler, 1978); The Secret Trauma (Russell, 1986); By Silence Betrayed (Crewdson, 1988); and The Silent Children (Sanford, 1980) to name just a few. There was no change in the use of the terms secret or silent over the course of a decade of claimsmaking about the extent of sexual abuse in American society. I came to see the ideas of silence and secrecy as part of the construction of the social problem. It seemed that the words silent or secret had to be used to keep the "discovery" of sexual abuse in a perpetual emergent phase. Instead of the silence being a barrier to my study it became a clue to claimsmaking activities.

Trying to work with these issues, I decided to use a variety of qualitative methods. My choice of field work, interviews and documentary methods allowed me to look at child sexual abuse from a number of vantage points (Strauss, 1987). It also permitted me to understand the constructions as narrative forms or as John Van Maanen (1988) has called them, "tales of the field." Qualitative research also was particularly well matched to the theoretical framework of social construction (Berger and

Luckmann, 1967). The blending of both method and theory allowed me to understand constructions as forms of discourses which were told by specific actors, with varying receptions from differently constituted audiences.

Research on Child Sexual Abuse

Studies of child sexual abuse itself have focused on perpetrators and victims, sexual addicts and adult survivors, family dynamics and therapeutic techniques. Covering a broad array of topics, these studies have been done by sociologists (Finkelhor, 1984), psychologists (Courtois, 1988), social workers (Rush, 1980), family therapists (Minuchin, 1984) and historians (Gordon, 1988). Through careful designs and meticulous reports, researchers and clinicians have made public a complicated world of child sexual abuse. By documenting facets of the problem, these writers have given voice to a social issue, while participating in its social construction and providing it with intellectual legitimacy.

The research that deals with how child abuse becomes constructed as social reality is scant and mostly addresses how social policy is enacted. Nelson's (1984) history of recent legislation focused on the physical abuse of children is an excellent examination of how social problems are made visible and how laws are enacted to deal with them. More recently, Linda Gordon's (1988) analysis

of the history and politics of family violence, including incest, pays close attention to the role of social service agencies in creating and reflecting changing definitions of social problems. For the most part, however, social scientists, including those who have written extensively about family violence, provided an abundance of literature on sexual abuse itself and ignored the fact that they were documenting a world of violence that they and their professions were helping to construct.

By emphasizing the number of abuse cases, the impact on the victim, the characteristics of the perpetrator, etc., experts have documented what appear to be the facts of sexual abuse. Hidden within this objectivity, however, are the social practices which shape the discourses on sexual abuse. These practices give meaning, shape parameters and create language, for the condition which is identified as problematic. A clear example of professions constructing problems can be found in David Finkelhor's (1984:2,3) analysis of how child sexual abuse became a social problem. He writes:

> New, popular attention to this problem can be ascribed not only to the discovery of its true dimensions, but also to the idea that sexual abuse is a different sort of problem than was once thought. We now know that a great deal of sexual abuse occurs at the hands of close family members, particularly fathers and stepfathers. Not uncommonly abuse goes on for an extended period of time...

Within the same work Finkelhor credits the discovery of the problem to feminists and those working in the field of the physical abuse of children, but his argument clearly assumes the existence of an "objective" problem, a problem which exists across time and culture and ignores the role of social scientists in promoting any particular construction.

My study focuses on the social forces, historical conditions and claimsmakers who made it possible for child sexual abuse to be identified as a social problem. I also examined the contested definitions of the problem where many of the claims are made evident. I was particularly interested in the mechanisms which allow a condition to become identified as problematic, even epidemic, when it is not clear that the incidence and prevalence of the problem itself have changed. To guide my research I began by asking the following question: How did child sexual abuse become conceptualized as a social problem in the 1970s and 1980s? This central question was supplemented by three more specific ones: 1) How and where did the focus on child sexual abuse originate? 2) Which groups developed and defended definitions? 3) What conflicts and strains occurred among groups vying to have their definitions adapted by professions and the public? 4) What were the competing definitions of the problem? To answer these questions about what Spector and Kitsuse (1987) call the

emergent phase of a social problem, I employed a variety of research methods including field work, documents and interviews.

Field Work

My preliminary research on child sexual abuse was a six month field study conducted through the Fall and Winter of 1984/1985. This study focused on the clinical supervision of 16 therapists working in groups with children and parents who had experienced interfamilial or extrafamilial abuse. The therapists were either Masters of Social Work candidates or Clinical Psychology or Counseling Program Ph.D. candidates. All had several years of clinical experience. The supervisor was a psychologist who headed a sexual abuse program at a local mental health agency. Located in a local school, the project was a part of Community Mental Health services. My research in this group was initially done in the context of a field methods course and continued after the course ended. Through 50 hours of observation and 5 interviews I was able to generate "thick description" (Geertz, 1983) of a child sexual abuse treatment program. Additionally, the setting alerted me to a number of issues which recurred not only in another field setting, but also in interviews and documents. These issues included: the "ownership" of child sexual abuse by mental health professionals; the

boundaries drawn between abusive and non-abusive sexual interactions; the perceived role of mothers, fathers and children in cases of incest; the secret as a currency of power which children hold in families; and the clinical definition of children as developmentally harmed by the danger of sexual abuse.

While I do not include this first field work directly as data for this study, the knowledge and vocabulary I learned in the setting proved invaluable. The issues I first noticed in the treatment program became analytic leads as I moved into a second field study. My second field site was at a local community-based youth service agency that received a federally funded demonstration grant to create a sexual abuse prevention program. The project was organized as a traveling education program, operating three-day programs out of ten shopping malls and libraries throughout the State of Michigan during 1986. My involvement with the prevention project was as a participant-observer. In this capacity I observed the design of the program--through the creation of brochures, public service announcements, posters, fact sheets, book displays, even a mascot. In order to gain an understanding of how a prevention project was created, I attended planning meetings, which were held for three months before the first program, and the debriefing sessions, which were held after each program had been staged. To watch the

program in action, I attended educational sessions held at libraries and observed in the shopping malls.

My role as a participant was in several capacities. I helped with the writing of the original grant proposal in 1985 by providing information on incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse in Michigan and explaining the available theoretical frameworks for analyzing these statistics. In this way I acted as something of a content "expert" in exchange for access to the field. I also helped with the distribution of pamphlets at the malls and served as a relief person for the staff when they needed breaks. Mostly, however, I observed interactions among the public and staff at the malls and libraries, and among the staff at meetings. In this way I was able to get front stage and backstage (Goffman, 1961) information on the construction of a sexual abuse prevention program. This was particularly helpful in that I could learn how information was managed, and how speech and silence entered into the presentation of material (Glaser, 1978).

The stated goal of the prevention program was to educate parents about the risks of sexual abuse so that they could protect their children. Because I had been sensitized to issues of danger, secrecy and power in the supervision group, I examined how these issues arose in a prevention setting. In particular I looked for the specific messages about sexual abuse, sexual touch and

bodies which were being transmitted to the general public. I wanted to know if child sexual abuse was always defined as very harmful to children; if sexual victimization was perceived as a mental health issue or if it was defined as a broader problem which was owned by a number of fields, e.g., medicine or law; and if secrecy about sexual abuse was defined as part of the problem or as a more complex phenomenon which included the secret as a potential source of power for the victim.

An additional point that interested me in these observations was the focus on parents as the individuals who were to be educated about sexual abuse. Since most sexual abuse is perpetrated by parents or close relatives (Sanford, 1980), I wondered how the project would manage to communicate this message - at a shopping mall (the new town square) - while at the same time not alienating its audience. The answer to this inquiry proved to be complicated, as I will discuss in later chapters, relying on the dual assumptions that the individual being educated was not an abuser and that abusers were quintessential "others." This depiction of sexual abusers allowed enough distance to be created between self (the individual being educated) and others for the prevention message to be told and presumably heard. It also reinforced the emerging social construction about the threatening environment which children experience in the world outside the home--a world

made vivid by the convergence of the Missing Children and Child Sexual Abuse Movements (Best, 1987).

These two sites proved to be very instructive in teaching me the "natural language" of professionals working in the field (Becker and Geer, 1969). Because one program focused on prevention and one on treatment, I was able to examine the definitions and strategies being employed at two of the most pivotal points in the arena of sexual abuse--trying to insure that abuse would not occur and helping children and their families recover from past incidents. By immersing myself in the language and protocols of prevention and treatment, I was able to generate theory from the ground up (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). At the same time I was aware of the fact that I was seeing only one construction - the clinical one - and that mental health organizations did not have hegemonic control over the definition of child sexual abuse. To give me a wider perspective I looked to documentary methods to help me formulate a comparative analysis of the social constructions.

Documents

While working in the field I simultaneously began an extensive search for library documents. Because this is a social problem that has produced a vast number of literatures, I designed a search strategy that would give

me access to the various cultural levels on which the problem was being addressed. Initially, I focused on discovering when sexual abuse began to appear in indices of professional and popular publications. Secondly, I looked at the ways in which sexual abuse was framed in these literatures. Very early in the process I ascertained that anthropological views of incest varied greatly from psychological research and sociological inquiries. The difference was not just one of professional jargon. Diction reflected a deeper issue. Anthropologists, as Margaret Mead's (1969) essay on "Incest" in the International Encyclopedia of Social Science exemplifies, were interested in incest not as a form of sexual abuse, but as a subject of a taboo that regulated kinship relations. This was a helpful definition to discover in the early phases of my research because it made me aware that analyses of sex between parents and children or siblings could yield very different information depending on how the topic was approached. The contrast of anthropological views with psychological or sociological ones also made the current construction of sexual abuse stand in greater relief and helped me to see the language of the construction as a powerful constituent element in the process of claimsmaking.

I wanted to use the documents to map the geography of the problem. In unearthing the material pertinent to the

construction of child sexual abuse I looked for documents which met some of the following criteria: 1) identification of child sexual abuse as a social problem that was gaining notoriety; 2) interpretation of the causes of sexual abuse; 3) agitation for a particular perspective; 4) adaptation of a language which was part of social problem construction - e.g., use of words like "epidemic," to describe the problem or "shattered" as a descriptor for the impact on children's lives; and 5) legitimation of the problem through the reliance on experts who could document the parameters of the problem.

I also looked for documents on the subject of sexual abuse that would negate the social construction of sexual abuse as a social problem. Since the process of negation required a definition of what was disputed, I thought the documents that contested the existence of sexual abuse as a social problem would provide some of the clearest explanations of how the problem was identified by those who were advocating for adoption of a social problem perspective. They did. These documents were particularly helpful in cutting through the "taken for granted" quality that appears in most of the writing on child sexual abuse which assumes widespread occurrence in the existence and definition of the problem. Documents were also helpful in looking for areas of conflict among the constructionists. For instance, while feminists analyzed and wrote about

family dynamics and structures that lead to abuse, the New Right was analyzing the prevalence of abuse in day care settings. Through this approach I tried to use the documents as subjects - capable of telling the story of social construction activity as consensual and conflictual processes.

My first searches for documents were done in professional publications that included: Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences; Bibliographic Index; Library of Congress Catalogue; Public Administration Laws; Comprehensive Dissertation Index; Sociological Abstracts; Social Science Citation Index; Social Science Index; Psychological Abstracts; Historical Abstracts; Women Studies Abstracts; Inventory of Marriage and Family Literature; and Index Medicus. To search the more popular literature I examined: Reader's Guide; New York Times Index; Alternative Press Index; and Television and News Index and Abstracts. I searched each of these sources from 1970 to 1988 on subjects like sexual abuse of children, incest, family violence, child pornography, missing children and sexual abuse prevention.

Other types of documents have also been central to my study of child sexual abuse. These documents include: brochures for prevention and/or treatment programs; pamphlets that provided safety tips or recovery strategies; requests for proposals; grant proposals; children's stories

and coloring books; conference advertisements; book advertisements; and newsletters. I also got data from television, radio, mass market films and tapes from conferences. Some of this data came from keeping field notes on television films about child sexual abuse and new programs about sexual abuse which have been aired on all the major networks, Public Television and on National Public radio which, for example, broadcast a four-part series on sexual abuse (April 7-11, 1984).

Inundated by the amount of material available, I began to sort out categories of analysis. Aware that discoveries were social constructs, I looked to the groups- "discoverers" - that could be identified as having a role in labeling child sexual abuse as a social problem (Glaser, 1978). I labeled groups "discoverers" if they participated in the following activities delineated by Spector and Kitsuse (1987): "1) assertion of the existence of some condition; 2) definition of that condition as undesirable or harmful; 3) publicization of the assertions; 4) stimulation of controversy; and 5) creation of a public or political issue over the matter." From this analysis I broadly identified feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right as contemporary claimsmakers about sexual abuse.

Having identified the main actors, I then moved to the second phase of my documentary research--discerning what

historical and social conditions led each group to make their assertions about sexual abuse. This required a search, structured like the first, into the growth of the second wave of feminism, contemporary psychotherapy, modern child protectionism and the New Right. At the same time, I began to classify the issues and stances which each of the constructionists found central to their positions. For example, in the case of incest, feminists portrayed power differentials between fathers and daughters as the key to sexual abuse, while clinicians identified role reversal occurring between mothers and .daughters as central. From these types of issues I formed analytical categories which created a coherent framework for tracing the discourses about sexual abuse (Glaser, 1978). I also carved out a chronology for the activities of claimsmakers and their influences on each other. In this way I was able to focus on the dynamic, changing nature of social construction activity.

Interviews

After completing much of the documentary research for the study, I decided to supplement the field and bibliographic methods with interviews. I had first interviewed people working in the field of child sexual abuse when I was observing the clinical supervision group and prevention programs described earlier. These study

informants, five in all, had been active in community work for at least a decade. Committed to the welfare of adolescents and children, each respondent gave me insights into the mechanisms by which one community - Lansing, Michigan - became aware of child sexual abuse and reacted to it. Because these interviews had been so helpful to my grasp of the social problem, and because my documentary research had aided me in identifying categories of actors who were claimsmakers, I decided to do more interviews.

The twenty-five people that I interviewed represented feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right. To ensure that I would get informants from all perspectives, I used a snowball sample, asking respondents to identify people from a variety of settings whom I could potentially interview.

In all I interviewed seven feminists, six clinicians, six child protection workers and six individuals who represented the New Right. Gaining access to some of the subjects was fairly easy. When I began interviewing I was working for a statewide social service agency that coordinated programs for runaway and homeless youth. At the time, 1985-1986, a causal link between child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse and runaway or homeless adolescents was just beginning to be documented (McCormack, Burgess and Janus, 1986). As an advocate for homeless youth I spent a large portion of my days either educating

social service workers about the causes and plights of homeless adolescents or trying to get the youths access to services. Because of this experience I had a familiarity with the network of child protective offices within the State and in the non-profit sector. I used this knowledge to approach initial interview subjects. These subjects in turn put me in touch with other child protectionists.

Feminist subjects were also easy to find. Having taught women studies courses for several years I was aware of and participated in a feminist network. Although segments of this network were academic, a larger portion was drawn from community activists. Aware of a program that had been created to teach children physical and verbal prevention skills - I began my interviews of feminists with the originators of this project. They, in turn, told me about other subjects.

Identifying clinicians working in the field was simplified because they sometimes advertised their connection to the issue. By using phone book ads - where clinicians advertised themselves as experts on the treatment of adult women survivors of child sexual abuse, and looking for places where clinicians might identify themselves as potential service providers - a feminist bookstore, the local newspaper, newsletters, etc., I found a large number of clinicians and therapeutic organizations like Incest Survivors Anonymous. Approaching some of these

individuals I tried to discern a clinical hierarchy so that I could interview those clinicians considered to be the most effective in treating sexual abuse cases.

Representatives from New Right organizations dealing with child sexual abuse were somewhat more difficult to find. One lead that proved particularly helpful was the formation of VOCAL (Victims of Child Abuse Legislation). In Michigan, VOCAL had strong ties to the fundamentalist New Right. Desperate to be heard, representatives of VOCAL were more than willing to talk about the "epidemic of sexual abuse" - an epidemic they perceived as based in unsubstantiated allegations. These subjects gave me leads to other individuals whom I could interview.

The interviews were "unstructured" and intensive (Oakley, 1981). They had an underlying structure which I observed, but enough looseness built into them that respondents could speak about their concerns and views in their own language (Whyte, 1979). In asking the interview subjects a combination of broad and specific questions, I wanted them to reflect on their contributions to the field and on their construction of child sexual abuse. This strategy served two purposes--first it introduced the idea that attention to social problems is not inevitable, and second, it allowed me to see respondents as representing categories of claimsmakers which revealed significant differences among the four constructions.

The interviews lasted for one and a half to two hours each and were held in either the respondents workplace or in a restaurant. I took extensive notes during each interview, transcribing and filling in details afterward. As the interviews progressed, I recognized that the narratives that I was recording were not linear presentations about social progress being made in children's best interest. Rather, they represented intense conflicts among the constructionists themselves, and with a variety of social institutions, including the family, education, medicine and the law.

The Methodological Mosaic

Field work, documentary methods and interviews provided me with three distinct approaches which fit to form a whole picture concerning the emergence of child sexual abuse as a social problem. From the field work I gained firsthand experience in how definitions of the problem were agreed upon and then communicated to the general public. Documents taught me how abuse gained national attention through the dissemination of professional and popular literature. I was also able to discern how and when definitions emerged and how they changed. Interviews gave me information on how individuals came into the field, how their perceptions of the problem evolved over time, and how they created a vocabulary for

their activities, particularly as they concerned protection programs.

Through these processes of data gathering, I identified three dimensions of phenomena which characterize the discourses on sexual abuse. The first concerns the specifics of child sexual abuse--for example, how prevalent is it? Who is involved? Who is at risk? This material represents a case study of a specific social condition. On a second dimension is information about the emergent phase of a social problem. How do contested definitions come into existence? How are definitions fought about? How do certain views gain prominence, and how do others lose favor?

The third level is the most general and has to do with the sociology of childhood. In analyzing my data I was struck over and over again by the fact that children and childhood were the subject of most of the material I was reading, but it was not the voices of children I was hearing. It became clear that the absence of children's voices in research on childhood or children, was not unusual. Yet, it was also evident that while I was analyzing how sexual abuse was spoken about, in studying abuse, I was also discovering that which was considered a culturally normal childhood, not just in regard to sexuality, but also in reference to protection and control issues, and the boundaries erected between adults and

children. In this way my research is like Myra Bluebond-Langner (1978) whose study of terminally ill children revealed much, by comparison, about the everyday world of children who were not ill, and of communication patterns between children and parents.

These three levels of analysis--sexual abuse, social problem formation and the social construction of childhood--emerged from the methodological mosaic and form a theoretical tapestry which is woven from the data presented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

HOW CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE EMERGED AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM IN THE 1970s

The definition of child sexual abuse as a social problem occurred because of a confluence of factors. These included the emergence of ideologically compatible social movements, challenges to previously held beliefs about the family, the split of reproduction from sexuality, changing views of childhood and the emergence of the New Right. As single causes probably none of these factors could have led to the constructions of child sexual abuse. Taken together, however, they made labeling the problem almost overdetermined.

Emergence of Social Movements

Beginning in the mid-1950s the United States witnessed the emergence of a number of social movements, including the civil rights, student and women's movements (Evans, 1979; Fritz, 1979). Marked by attention to injustices and social inequities, these movements mobilized people by shifting their perceptions, changing their consciousness and calling them to action. Discrimination and prejudice

were no longer seen as natural aspects of social relations to be endured at any cost (Turner, 1969). Instead, they were identified as social problems which were possible, even imperative, to change. Of these movements, it was clearly the women's movement, with its focus on gender inequality and women's position in the family, which would come to have the most direct effect on the construction of child sexual abuse as a social problem.

The Women's Movement

As chronicled by numerous historians, including Jo Freeman (1975), Sara Evans (1979) and William Chafe (1972), the women's movement began in the early 1960s. One starting point was the publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique which identified problems in women's lives. Friedan was attempting to identify what she called "the problem that has no name;" women's vague, amorphous sense that they were trapped, unable to create meaning or wield power (Friedan, 1963). Although she did not attend to issues of race, class, or sexual orientation, which create different life contexts and therefore alter possibilities for meaning and afford differential access to power, Friedan nonetheless called attention to an important problem in women's lives: lack of identity. The absence of identity resulted from the cultural expectation that women live through men and find fulfillment by caring for

homes, husbands and children. A massive negation of self left many women with lives filled with valium, but bankrupt of meaning. Friedan's analysis called for women to struggle for the right to self-determination, higher education and paid work (Friedan, 1963). She struck a responsive chord in many women, some of whom had already begun to address issues of gender inequality.

On a more structural level Jo Freeman has located the origins of the women's movement in two groups that differed in style, politics and form. The older branch of the movement had a hierarchical structure, no mass base and was primarily concerned with the issue of women's legal and economic equality. From this first group grew the National Organization for Women, as well as the Women's Equality Action League, and the National Women's Political Caucus (Freeman, 1975).

The second group emerged from more radical roots, most notably the civil rights movement and the New Left. Finding that women's subordination was treated as a non-issue by their male peers, women who had participated in these movements felt that they were fighting for equality, freedom and rights for others while they remained outsiders (Evans, 1979). Having internalized a radical view not only of the social structure, but also of themselves, these actors created a mass movement for women's rights. Although no one unifying group formed from

these efforts, most urban areas and university campuses spawned consciousness raising groups and grass roots attempts to change women's social and political status (Freeman, 1975). An important insight of these groups of young women, most under age 30, was the discovery of the personal nature of political issues. Far from an empty cliche or slogan, this idea revealed the fact that intimate relationships were not comprised of isolated interactions, private events or atomized emotions. Like Mills' sociological insight that private troubles often veil public issues, the feminist insight served to illuminate a new vision of the fundamentally political nature of intimate relationships. Of particular importance to these early feminists was the systematic and systemic domination which men held over women.

Men's domination of women has been central to most of the analyses which have appeared during the second wave of feminism, (e.g., Griffin, 1978; Rowbotham, 1972; Oakley, 1976; Dalla Costa, 1973). Focusing on issues such as mental health, medicine, science, politics, reproduction, household inequities, economic disparity and sexual politics, feminists articulated a theory of patriarchy. Although problematic as a concept because it has been divorced from its historical context and anthropological concreteness, the idea of patriarchy has nevertheless been useful and key to feminist writing about male power over

women and children (Eisenstein, 1981; Barrett, 1980). Replacing Marxist attention to social class with an analysis of sex, Firestone (1970) and Millett (1971) both define patriarchy as the fundamental, and primary organizing principle of modern society. Particularly important to the uncovering of child sexual abuse, and therefore necessary to explore at length, has been the work done on the family as an institution and on rape as a crime of violence.

Feminist Understandings of the Family

One of the earliest, significant statements about women's oppression in the family was written by Juliet Mitchell in 1966. Titled, "Women: The Longest Revolution" and later published as part of Women's Estate (1971), Mitchell's analysis focused on four central structures: production, reproduction, sexuality and the socialization of children. According to the author these structures offer a general framework for understanding women's social position.

Mitchell argues that production entails the ways in which work is organized, as well as the manner in which social relations are articulated in the labor process. The gender division of labor is part of these relations, which also reflect differential access to resources, including money, property, mobility and status. Reproduction, which

has been fundamental to men's control over women, is the ways in which pregnancy and child bearing are socially defined. Subsumed under this structure are contraceptive and child bearing techniques and definitions. Sexuality, which Mitchell saw as the focal point of contradictions within western society, includes how sex is defined, controlled and repressed. Ideas of legitimate and illegitimate sex, which reveal the degree to which heterosexuality and gender inequality reinforce and shape one another, are a central facet of the sexual structure. Mitchell hypothesized that sexuality was the weak link in the fusion of the four structures because once sex and reproduction were separated from each other, sex became more widely accepted outside of familial relations and the monolithic unity of the family was rendered vulnerable.

The final structure which Mitchell addresses is the socialization of children. In any society rearing and caring for children is socially organized. It is part of the overall division of labor, which may be accorded varying arrangements, either public, private or some combination of the two. Mitchell points out that because of current child care arrangements the lives of women and children are inextricably bound. This insight, which served to underline the shared fates of women and children would become central to feminist understanding of sexual violence and its impact on children.

Each of these structures is socially defined, constructed and changeable. Although each can be analyzed in isolation, it is their "complex unity" which gives the structures layers of expression and meaning. Particularly important for understanding child sexual abuse is the way in which reproduction, sexuality and the socialization of children are located in the family. This "monolithic fusion" has given rise to strong ideological systems which declare that infants be born in wedlock, that children be raised by their mothers, and that sex occur in marriage.

Mitchell argued that women are defined by the family. Their task is to maintain the dailiness of family life and raise children. As the reproduction of children has taken up less and less time, women's role as nurturers and socializers has expanded. Mitchell's point here has been echoed by a number of other writers who have written extensively about the dramatic increase in concern with mother-infant attachments appearing at the same historical moment that women's physical role in reproduction becomes less absorbing (Rich, 1977; Barrett and McIntosh, 1982). For Mitchell the importance of full-time mothering, requiring intense involvement in children's development, acts to perpetuate women's isolation in the family. Thus, Mitchell's analysis locates the source of women's oppression in the family and shows how family organization, far from being preordained, or natural, is

socially constructed and organized. Following Mitchell's structural consideration of the family and challenge to its seemingly monolithic nature, a number of feminists focused on this most intimate of institutions. Probably no feminist gave a more dramatic account of women's link to children in families than Shulamith Firestone who, in the Dialectic of Sex explored their mutually reinforcing oppressions. She wrote (1970:72):

> Women and children are always mentioned in the same breath... The special tie women have with children is recognized by everyone. I submit, however, that the nature of this bond is no more than shared oppression. And that moreover this oppression is intertwined...we will be unable to speak of the liberation of women without also discussing the liberation of children...

Firestone elaborated an analyses of childhood as a cult which had a structural basis in the family and education. Drawing on the history of the sentimentalization of childhood, she believed that children's inequality stemmed more from their economic than psychological dependence, but that the former was used to justify the latter.

The Family as an Expression of the Sex/Gender System

If Firestone's and Mitchell's work, along with that of other writers like Kate Millett (1971), Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977) revealed the social, political and historical rootedness of family forms, perhaps no one gave a richer nor more complex rendering of

these social relations than Gayle Rubin (1975). Writing an essay entitled, "The Traffic in Women: Notes Towards a Political Economy of Sex," Rubin identified what she called a sex/gender system and defined it as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (Rubin, 1975). Key to Rubin's concept, which would come to provide a foundation for the study of the social organization of gender, was an understanding of the social relations of sexuality as they applied to women and, to a lesser extent, children. Using the idea, first put forward by Engels (1973), that the Marxist theory of the social relations of production has a parallel in the social relations of reproduction, Rubin expanded on Mitchell's insight concerning the social construction of gender, families and sexualities.

Rubin's theory is centered on an integration of aspects of Marxism, psychoanalysis and structural anthropology. Rubin uses these traditions to examine a system of inequality based on gender and sexual orientations. It is the social meaning given to biological categories which interested the anthropologist. According to Rubin, "Sex as we know it - gender identity, sexual desire, fantasy, concepts of childhood - is itself a social product" (Rubin, 1975). Rubin's work embraced a cultural

relativism which permitted her to view all relationships as organized and determined by human activity. Her theory posed women's inequality as a problem of social relationships. By asking how women were oppressed as women, Rubin produced a systemic analysis of women's place in the economy of gender relations. Noting that women are objects of exchange in kinship systems, and examining the ways in which heterosexuality enforces women's tie to men and reproduces the gender division of labor, Rubin was able to account for the perpetuation of structural and relational gender inequality within the institution of the family.

Like Mitchell, one of Rubin's main contributions was to reveal the ways in which kinship systems had lost many of their historical functions such as production, education and politics. (Although clearly the family still engages in activities such as home schooling or cottage industries, even when they are contested by the state.) In the wake of such losses these systems have emerged primarily as organizers of sexuality and gender. Families, in part, exist to reproduce gender categories and sexualities which are deemed culturally appropriate (Rubin, 1975). As the repositories of cultural norms regarding sex and gender the family emerges as a major locus of women's and children's oppression. This analysis of the family as a place where inequality exists differed significantly from previous

sociological writings which had emphasized the ways the family brought men and women together in complementary instrumental and expressive roles (Parsons, 1954).

Just as Mitchell and Rubin were central, but certainly not lone, actors in making the social nature of gender clear, and in challenging the perceived naturalness of current family arrangements, others examined the meaning of the privatization of family life.

The "Private" Sphere of Family Life

One of the many questions addressed by writers in the second wave of feminism has been the relationship between the so called "public" sphere of work and the "private" sphere of the family (Benston, 1969; Hartmann, 1976; Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974). Feminists have asked not only about the relationship of the economy to the family, but also have delved into the ideology of privacy which surrounds the family. This ideology depicts the family as isolated from other social institutions, and protected from the alienation which has come to characterize the social relations of capitalism (Lasch, 1979). Unraveling the threads of this ideological fabric, feminists have looked at the ways in which the family is embedded in the nest of social relations (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982).

Exploring the public/private split wrought by modern industrial societies, Eli Zaretsky (1976) sketched a brief

history and description of the relationship between the two spheres in his book Capitalism, The Family and Personal Life. Zaretsky who claimed that feminists had discovered the problem of dual spheres, without providing a thorough analysis, attempted to fill this lacunae. His thesis stated that the rise of industrial capitalism produced a public world of work that did not allow for the expression of emotions or the realization of identity. The pursuit of authenticity, emotion, meaning and self was relegated to the economically unproductive family.

The main claim of Zaretsky's argument is expressed in his belief that "proletarianization gave rise to subjectivity" (Zaretsky, 1976). Subjectivity was not the equal province of men and women, however, it was part of the gender division of labor which gave women responsibility for the personal fulfillment of family members, but subordinated women's own needs to that of every other person in the family. In western industrial societies the work of personal life encompassed a wide range of duties including: sexuality, care of children's physical and psychological needs, as well as attending to the "instinctual events" of birth, sickness and death (Mitchell, 1976; Thorne, 1982). The public/private split existed for men who dominated the public world of work and experienced the family as a refuge from that world. Women,

however, experienced a fusion of the two worlds because the family was their work (Pleck, 1976).

Zaretsky chronicles a shift of the family from a productive unit to the locus of subjective life. This shift is not only the history of women's increasing subordination, nor a documentation of the family's increasing isolation, it is also the story of how capitalism made the search for identity an integral part of personal life at the same time it commodified and marketed identity to individuals. Searching for a self, an activity once tied to production, became a consumption activity (Lasch, 1979; Birken, 1988).

As Zaretsky makes clear, the boundary between public and private worlds is, at best, ambiguous. He writes: "The family is an important material basis for subjectivity and for psychological life and is part of the economy" (Zaretsky, 1976). Zaretsky's ideas were symbolically important because they represented currents of thought that were moving out into popular culture. These insights had several layers of significance for the social constructionists of child sexual abuse. First, they identified women as responsible for organizing family units centered on children's growth and development. Once again the link between women and children was examined. Secondly, the discussion of ways in which identity and individual uniqueness become important under capitalism,

paved the way for an analysis which shows how the experience of being sexually abused can come to be seen as central to a person's sense of self. This insight is essential because so much of the modern constructions of sexual abuse are built on the scaffold of identity. Third, and equally important, is the analysis of the family as private. As long as the family is perceived as private, regardless of its immutably social form, what happens within it is prohibited from public scrutiny. Once this perception is challenged and the family is seen as an institution, its fundamentally social nature can be examined. No longer immune from inspection, the family can be identified as housing contradictory social relations: it is both a place of deep intimacy and sociability and of profound violence and isolation. Awareness of these types of contradictions led to a broader rethinking of the family.

Contradictions Within the Family

Critical analyses of the family as an institution were not limited to identifying the parameters of its monolithic structure, the power of the sex/gender system or the boundaries of the public/private sphere. A central theme of feminist writings has been the density of experiences within families. Summing up this point of view Barrie Thorne (1982:10) has written:

> Because families are structured around gender and age, women, men, girls and boys do not experience their families in the same way. Feminists have explored the differentiation of family experience mystified by the glorification of motherhood, love and images of the family as a domestic haven. Feminists have voiced experience that this ideology denies: men's dominance and women's subordination within as well as outside the family, and the presence of conflict and violence.

As a new way of thinking about the family, gender and childhood such analyses brought established social relations into question. Far from the natural structures they were long thought to be, "intimate institutions" were shown to have social and historical origins and legacies. Evidence for this point of view was not limited to feminists.

One important change in thinking about the family came from challenges to role theory. Having dominated post World War II sociological thought, role theory came under the scrutiny of writers who emphasized structural issues and historical contexts (Ross, 1979). The broad theme of the limitations within role theory were also echoed by more traditional social scientists. Beginning with William J. Goode's World Revolution and Family Patterns (1963) functionalist views of the family as isolated and harmonious entities were challenged. Goode - expressing an idea that would be shared by many feminists - identified coercion, not role integration, as the ultimate basis of family order.

Goldthorpe (1987), writing a history of western families, and following Morgan (1975), noted that some family theorists could be classified as pessimistic abolitionists, such as Herbert Marcuse (1955) who wish to see the family annihilated because it fits the requirements of a destructive society too well--others as optimistic abolitionists like Barrington Moore (1958), who believe the family is declining because it no longer meets the needs of advanced industrial societies. The significance of these arguments lies not so much in the merit of each position, but in the process of questioning the social relations which comprise and affect the family and influence its future direction. This process would ultimately provide a starting point for those seeking to uncover what happens behind the closed doors of family life. Before it was possible to examine intimate violence, however, it was necessary for violence against women to become a topic of concern. Much of this work was done within the framework of the rape crisis movement.

Violence Against Women

Rape is a crime of violence. A simple statement, this fact rests at the heart of the feminist discussion of a crime that had previously been identified as sexual in motivation (Burgess and Holmstrom, 1978). Prior to the contemporary women's movement the topic of rape was

understood as intellectually belonging to criminologists (eg. Amir, 1971) who ignored gender as a primary category of analysis. Culturally, rape was a subject riddled with misconceptions, surrounded by myths and inculcated with humor. Women were viewed as causing rape through sexual promiscuity or provocation. A woman who was sexually active, who wore "revealing clothing," or who walked alone at night was, in popular view, begging to be raped. The idea of a woman's responsibility for a crime that was committed against her, a parallel that does not exist with other crimes such as murder, was reinforced with the notion that women wanted to be raped. From this convoluted perspective, the rapist fulfills the wishes of the victim. On the occasions when rape was defined as a criminal act it was not the woman who was violated, but the man she existed in relation to - either her father, brother, or husband. Women were men's property and rape was a crime against this property (Brownmiller, 1975).

Beginning in the late 1960s the women's movement challenged these perceptions. Identifying rape as a gendered phenomenon, feminists disputed the premise that rape was an act of sexual passion (Griffin, 1970). Instead they looked at the violence inherent in the act. By shifting perceptions, the power dynamic in rape was revealed; rape was a form of power that men had over women. Creating this change in definition was not simple. Even

women with commitments to feminist causes tended to disown the topic: "Rape was a sex crime, a product of a diseased, deranged mind. Rape wasn't a feminist issue . . . The women's movement had nothing in common with rape victims" (Brownmiller, 1975:1). The woman who voiced this sentiment later described herself as "a woman who changed her mind about rape" and along with several other writers and numerous consciousness raising groups, Susan Brownmiller helped change many people's minds about the subject.

The Feminist Perspective on Rape

In her 1970 article, "Rape: The All American Crime" published in "Ramparts" magazine, Susan Griffin challenged prevailing notions of rape. Reiterating criminologist Menachem Amir's research finding that rapists were not aberrant individuals, but "normal" men, Griffin sought to explain the taken-for-granted quality of rape in American culture. She argued that rape was cloaked in a "conspiracy of silence" which permeated the isolation of victims, many of whom believed they were alone in their experience and most of whom were convinced they were to blame. Women, Griffin argued, were socialized to be victims by a culture which equated femininity with submission. Additionally, Griffin offered an analysis of rapists that linked male gender expectations and sexual requirements. In her

framework rape was a crime that men perpetrated against women. Rape was also metaphoric for the pervasive power which men wield over women in all heterosexual relationships (Griffin, 1970).

While Griffin set herself the task of naming rape as a profound violation of women's lives, Susan Brownmiller became the leading cultural historian of the topic. Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape appeared in 1975. Long and painful, it contained 458 pages of unrelenting descriptions of atrocities which had been committed against women. Brownmiller's book was also enormously popular. Serving notice that rape was a serious concern, she presented a complex history. Legally sanctioned, pervasive in war as well as peace, rape represented "a conscious process by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (Brownmiller, 1975).

As part of her extensive analysis Brownmiller made a brief, fourteen pages, foray into the subject of child sexual abuse. Relying on the Kinsey reports of the 1940s, Brownmiller stated that between one in four girls, and one in eleven boys would be sexually assaulted before the age of 18. Attempting to make these statistics come alive for her audience, the author employed evidence from the writings and lives of famous people, including Maya Angelou, Billie Holiday and Virginia Woolf. Personal narratives provided a power and a sense of urgency to the

topic which statistics tended to obscure. Sounding themes which would reverberate throughout the next decade, Brownmiller attributed blame for the invisibility of sexual abuse to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the property relation that exists between fathers and daughters, and traditional attitudes towards rape.

The general feminist understanding of rape that emerged at this time was an analysis of power which recognized the overt and covert nature of rape. Overtly rape acted to constrain women's freedom in the social world. Covertly it acted to limit women's psychological world. Rape was not always a present reality, but the fear of rape was. In part this fear emanated from the realization that rape was not just a crime of strangers. Mostly it was a crime of intimates which took place within the context of an existing relationship, in a familiar place. It was often difficult for a woman to identify her experience as rape because the lines between normal heterosexual relationships and rape were blurred. Men, who were taught that a woman who says no really means yes, believed that they had a right to coerce a woman into sex; they were merely playing by the rules of gender socialization. Women who were taught that rape was something that occurred between strangers in a dark alley, found it difficult to identify the coercion they experienced in intimate sexual relations as rape. In fact,

before it was possible for feminists to analyze sexual violence between intimates in a concerted way - proposing theories, offering services - battered women would become a focus of social problem construction.

Wife Battering: The Analysis of Gendered Violence Moves Inside the Home

Attention to wife battering occurred after the recognition that rape by non-intimates was a social problem (Straus and Hotaling, 1980; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980; Roy, 1977; McGrath, 1979). For feminists these two constructions were connected by several threads. First, there was a conceptual relationship between the violence male strangers exerted over women and the physical domination that husbands exerted over wives. Second, following the lead of child protectionists and medical constructionists, feminists recognized that physical child abuse and neglect were not isolated events in otherwise smoothly functioning families. Households which contained intergenerational violence often included gendered violence. Third, feminists who began providing services for the rape crisis movement were inundated by requests for services from battered women (Schecter, 1983). Organized to serve those who were raped, volunteers staffing crisis phone lines and walk-in clinics, were shocked by the number of women seeking help because they were beaten by their significant others (Wharton, 1982).

Feminists began to identify, battering as part of the social relations of gender. The power men exerted over women included, and many felt in some ways was based on, physical force; if women did not adhere to whatever normative expectations existed, they could be beaten into submission (Martin, 1976). Discovering the fact that women were beaten in intimate environments was a necessary precursor for uncovering child sexual abuse and provided a pivotal conceptual link between physical child abuse and neglect in the family and rape. Battering moved the discourse about violence into the home where incest, one of the first types of child sexual abuse addressed, occurs. By focusing on the extent of battering, feminists made the same argument they had made about rape - this is a commonplace event. The focus on the commonality of intimate violence and its horror - seemingly contradictory ideas - would also form the basis for feminist claims about incest. Before incest could be talked about, however, battering came to be seen as a social problem.

Articulating a social problem perspective on battering required documentation of its incidence and prevalence, creation of theories to explain its existence and mobilization of resources to address the problem (Wiener, 1981). It also required a sympathetic victim; someone whom the general public could see as a real person, suffering at the hands of a loved one. The first three tasks would be

accomplished by experts. The fourth would be the province of the media.

Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics have revealed that 1.8 million women are battered each year and that a woman is beaten every 18 seconds in the United States (Council Against Domestic Assault, 1986). Making these numbers known and creating theories to explain the prevalence of battering was the project of a number of people who became identified as experts on the topic, including professionals such as psychologists, sociologists and social workers. The primary constructionists of battering identified themselves first not as members or representatives of professions, however, but as feminists who held a particular vision of male dominance and female subordination.

Feminists' views of battering have focused on the social relations of gender which give men power over women. Linking this power to the division of labor, women's dependence on men and the socialization process, feminists showed the prevalence of physical coercion in intimate relationships (Roy, 1977; Nicarthy, 1986). One of the essential processes explored in these analyses was the pattern established within battering relationships. By focusing on the rhythms which structure battering, feminists such as Lenore Walker (1979) were able to create an analysis of the phenomenon which revealed intimate

violence not as an aberrant or one time event, but rather an everyday occurrence in the lives of many women. Through this type of construction, feminists also analyzed violence as an institutionalized phenomenon--one built into the core of male-female relationships.

Additional theories about women's experience of physical abuse came from sociologists and psychologists. Sociological explanations relied on structural variables and correlated abuse with poverty, unemployment and the isolation of the contemporary nuclear family. Studies by Dobash and Dobash (1979) and Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) revealed that violence in the home reaches across categories of class and race.

Less focused on social structure, psychologists have been more interested in deciphering the personality of the assailant and victim. Developing profiles of those who became involved in battering meant that therapeutic responses could be offered as solutions to the problem. On a more complex level a new developmental theory of battering was designed which looked to a combination of structural causes, psychological attributes and family systems (Minuichin, 1984). Integrating feminist theory with sociological constructs and psychological analyses allowed a number of views to speak to each other and pointed both to the influence of feminist thought on the

conceptualization of the social problem and the fact that feminists did not solely possess the problem.

If feminists shared theoretical ownership of the problem with rival claimsmakers, such as criminologists and psychologists, for a longer period they were the lone service providers who were responsive to battered women. By creating safe homes, statewide and national telephone hotlines and shelters, feminists were able to aid women in their attempt to, at least temporarily, escape violent relationships (Wharton, 1982). As service delivery to battered women became institutionalized, it gained legitimacy through state sponsorships. Although this shift meant that more money was available for a variety of services, it also signaled the rise of an anti-feminist professionalism, and the diminishment of feminists' power to define the social problem (Gordon, 1988). The imprint of feminists understandings of violence between men and women in intimate relationships remained indelible, however, and took several new foci including marital rape, and child sexual abuse.

The Split of Reproduction From Sexuality

One of the key issues which has adhered to definitions of sexual violence, whether the problem is rape or child sexual abuse, is the relationship of sex to violence. As discussed above, feminists fought mightily to shift

professional and popular perception that rape, and by extension sexual abuse, are crimes of violence, not acts of sexual passion. As Linda Tschirhart Sanford (1980:122) has written:

> In all forms of child sexual abuse, we find that sex is not the major motivation. Other problems, sometimes not too far from the surface, motivate the crimes; it is not a matter of unmet sexual needs.

Yet, in the contemporary construction of sexual abuse as a social problem, the fact that the abuse is sexual is significant for several reasons. First, sexual abuse and physical abuse have been identified by feminists, child protectionists, clinicians and the New Right as separate problems, with unique properties (Walters, 1975; Courtois, 1988). It is the sexual aspect of molestation that makes it a distinct entity. Secondly, earlier discussion of sexual abuse, particularly incest, focused on threats to genetic purity and reproductive problems. In these writings, exemplified by Mead (1969), the concern is not so much about the individual identified as the victim, but about the offspring of the victim. In order for the damage done to the victim to become a focus of concern, the concepts of reproduction and sexuality had to be split (Gordon, 1988). This split would interact with another emerging process--the experience of sexuality as a cornerstone of personal identity (Weeks, 1985). I will argue that it would follow that if sexuality could be a

basis of identity, damage done to sexuality could also be a source of identity.

The ability to see sexuality as separate from reproduction required that heterosexual sex not inevitably lead to procreation. Technologically, this change was made possible by the creation of the birth control pill. Socially, shifts in American culture which date to the 1920s were responsible for the perception. Documented by a number of historians and sociologists including Weeks (1985), Plummer (1975) and D'Emilio and Freedman (1988) these changes in American culture were part of a redefinition of private and public spheres, of relationships between the family as an institution and society in general and of boundaries between youth and adults. These scholars perceive the period from 1950 through the 1970s as a time of sexual crisis. Rooted in capitalist relations which commodified and commercialized sex, changes in sexual relations between women and men, and the social movements which created the context of the period, these types of changes "make political, issues that have previously been regarded as scarcely political at all: questions of identity, pleasure, consent and choices" (Weeks, 1985:32).

Sexuality as a Source of Identity

Prior to the eighteenth century sexuality had been contested primarily through religious and secular arenas, with sex in the confines of marriage and family becoming the dominant and only legitimate form of sexual expression (Weeks, 1985). During the 19th century secular institutions such as medicine, psychiatry and education challenged the power of religion. As a result of this dispute a new, secularized idea of sexual normalcy and sexual deviance appeared (Weeks, 1986). Concurrently there emerged the possibility of creating a subjective sense of self on the basis of adherence to or deviation from a sexual category. Michael Foucault (1980), whose three volume history traced layers of discourses about sexuality and challenged the notion that repression had been the western cultural norm towards sexual matters, showed how identity has become centrally connected to sex. According to Foucault: "We seek the truth of our nature through sexuality" (Foucault, 1980:69).

Part of the search for self through sexuality has occurred through the creation of organizations, groups and communities based on shared sexual affiliations or orientations. D'Emilio (1983) points to the proximity of large numbers of individuals in the same situation; a cadre of leaders; and a clear oppositional group and pivotal event, which can serve as a catalyst for bringing people

together. The most well-documented creation of a sexual self through community is the case of gay men and lesbians who during World War II were able to find pockets of safety based on shared identities (D'Emilio, 1983). Sexuality as the basis of identity and experience has also been an issue within feminism. Called "the sexuality debates," feminist discussions of sex havve centered on sexuality as a source of pleasure and as a source of danger. As an attempt to reclaim sexuality for women, theorists who focus on sex as a liberatory force, see it as essential to women's development of a new set of ethics, principles and morals. In this analysis, women's ownership of their bodies and sexualities empowers them to reject systems of patriarchal oppression and to redefine issues like pornography and sadomasochism from a feminist standpoint.

Feminist writers who have focused more on the dangerous aspects of sexuality, have examined the ways in which being embodied has been a liability to women. Oppressed both by the commodification and commercialism of capitalist depictions of women's sexuality and the patriarchal ideology which sanctions violence against women, feminists in this camp see sex as a primary locus for women's ongoing subordination.

The importance of this debate, as I see it in relationship to child sexual abuse, lies in the fact that it makes sexuality the center of attention and raises

issues about how sex has been used to abuse women, and how it can be used for women to fashion a new identity-outside the bounds of either violence or reproduction (Vance, 1984).

The split of reproduction from sexuality, and the evocation of sexuality as the basis of identity both represent historical moments in the construction of sexuality. At the heart of this construct is the recognition that far from a natural phenomenon, sexuality is a product of social forces. Part of the activity of construction is the creation and maintenance of difference and entails delineating boundaries among social categories--especially men and women, and adults and children (Weeks, 1986). As a process, the shaping of these boundaries is documented through the creation of various discourses not only by feminists, but also by clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right.

Children's Rights Movement

One of the "last" social movements to be spawned from the civil rights and women's movements started in the United States in the 1970s and focused attention on the rights of children. The children's liberation movement was made possible by a core value conflict in western societies--the prolongation of childhood dependency in the context of teaching adult responsibility. The modern

children's crusade (Boulding, 1977) focuses on the human rights which children deserve and need. Unlike the movements for racial or gender equality where the oppositional forces were identified as racists or sexists, those who opposed children's rights could do it under the guise of protection: thus, both sides could claim to act in children's best interest.

The tension between the rights of children and their need for protection had, as discussed in Chapter Two, first come to public attention in disputes over labor earlier in the 20th century. The result of these Progressive Era conflicts led to a notion of children's right to be protected by adults from exploitative labor practices and children's removal from the labor market (Zelizer, 1985). Saved from having to work, children were mandated to go to school, where they would be prepared for adulthood. During the lag period of dependence, children were valued for their emotional being rather than any contribution or social activity. Relegated to a secondary status, children's worlds were segregated from those of adults.

The children's rights movements of the 1970s which had begun internationally in the 1960s, defined children's domination by adults as a social problem. As Elise Boulding (1977) has pointed out, the children's movement in the U.S. was really two movements, one which included children in urban areas who were between eight and

fourteen, who had the support of adults and an older group of adolescents, including those of college age. The fact that this movement was generated by children meant that it focused less on the need for protection and more on the responsibilities and rights which children sought. These rights which Wald (1979) has labeled liberty rights, entail children having greater autonomy to make their own decisions. Including simple decisions about food and clothing or more complex ones about relationships and birth control. Liberty rights exist in tension with claims rights which represent children's right to be protected, including the right to be protected from sex with adults.

Many social critics, like Marie Winn (1983) and Neil Postman (1982), countered the children's liberation movement, arguing that children's right to protection has been increasingly encroached upon. Arguing that children need protection, instead of independence, these critics have urged that childhood be restored to its "natural" state of innocence (Elkind, 1981). In this view children are protected from adults by age of consent laws, and censorship practices. Sexuality is dangerous to children, and is solely the purview of adults. Picking up on these themes and sounding them with great urgency, coupled with moral fervor, the New Right emerged as a powerful voice in the discourses on sexual abuse.

The New Right

One of the strongest political and religious forces to appear in American society over the past two decades was the New Right (Gordon and Hunter, 1977). Based on single issue campaigns aimed at topics like abortion, busing and homosexuality, the New Right found its constituency among Christians, middle class white women and segments of the Old Right (Weeks, 1985; and Dworkin, 1983). Central to the New Right's platform has been a campaign to defend the family. The family's need for protection stems from the erosion it has experienced since the 1960s. Directly blamed for this erosion is the loss of traditional family roles where men wield power over women, who emotionally support them, and children, who revere them (Eisenstein, 1981). Jeffrey Weeks (1986:12) has written:

> In the New Right vision of social order the family has a policing role. It ensures carefully demarcated spheres between men and women, adults and children. It regulates sexual relations and sexual knowledge. It enforces discipline and proper respect for authority. It is a harbour of moral responsibility and the work ethic. This is contrasted to the ostensible moral chaos that exists outside.

The power of the Rights' position has been in its effectiveness in creating, sustaining and addressing a moral panic about the sexual permissiveness of American culture. Moral panics, as described by Stanley Cohen (1972), arise from attention given to relatively minor problems. These minor problems act as a focal point for

articulating cultural anxiety about more extreme problems which go unexpressed. This dynamic can be clearly seen in the missing children's movement which generated intense concern about stranger abduction--a problem which effected only 35 children in 1983 while - drawing attention away from violence within the home (Spitzer, 1986).

The Pro-family movement advocated by the Right drew strength from evangelical religious sources which sought to reverse the secularization of American society (Viguerie, 1981). By defining the family as a social problem, a very different problem than feminists defined, the Right focused attention on abortion, sexuality, even taxes, as a threat to social stability. Child sexual abuse--by strangers--was seen as a problem that had occurred because women had moved outside of the home and into the workforce. Children's vulnerability was a direct result of women's abdication of familial roles. Traditional family forms were identified as protecting children's innocence; with the reassertion of natural family roles, children would no longer be victimized.

Summary

A number of social forces and changes set the stage for the particular constructions of child sexual abuse that began appearing in the early 1970s. Complex and layered, these forces included: a redefinition of women's role

within families, the family as an institution, sexuality as a source of identity and childhood. In a context of changing norms and social movements these altered definitions have led to a rethinking of the boundaries between adults and children with sexuality acting as a line which demarcates the two statuses. As feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right vied to define the problem of child sexual abuse, each approached their task from unique, sometimes contradictory perspectives and assumptions. Each took the breaking of silence about abuse as their initial objective. The discourses which interacted with, replaced and created new silences are the topics of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Writing on the history of sexuality Foucault (1980:27) has noted "there is not one, but many silences, and they underlie and permeate discourses." All of the "discoverers" - feminist, clinical, child protectionists, and the New Right - advanced discourses about child sexual abuse. Each discourse strategy had three narrative dimensions: first, it tried to break the silence which it believed permeated children's sexual victimization - a silence each group perceived and defined differently; second, it created its own narratives about the social problem; and third, it interacted with the other discourses on points of agreement, conflict and strain, as each vied to control public and professional perceptions of the problem. In order to uncover the construction of sexual abuse as a social problem, this chapter documents the chronology of the constructions and illuminates and examines the themes which have formed the narrative of each discourse. The concrete facts of constructionist activity is drawn from documents, field work and interviews.

Child Sexual Abuse Becomes a Social Problem

Children have always been abused and adults have always exhibited ambivalence towards children. (DeMause, 1974; Gordon, 1988; and Boswell, 1988). Public and professional attention to the treatment of abused children--including battering, neglect, abandonment and sexual abuse - has been less consistent and coherent and has been dependent on other social forces and practices. Gordon (1988:26) noted this pattern:

> Born as a social problem in an era of a powerful women's rights movement, the 1870s campaign against child abuse and wife-beating have tended to lose momentum and support, even to disappear altogether, when feminist influence is in decline.

As Gordon's documentary history made clear, attention to children's sexual victimization has been strongly linked to, and dependent upon, the first and second waves of feminism.

In its first documentation, between 1880 and 1910, sexual abuse of children was conceptualized as a problem of poor, usually immigrant, families, where men wielded considerable power over women and children (Platt, 1969). During the 1920s perceptions of sexual abuse shifted. Strangers, rather than family members, were identified as the leading source of children's sexual victimization, and from the point of view of adults, children became culpable for their own sexual abuse (Gordon, 1988). No longer victims, children were the new perpetrators. Writing on

children's role in sexual assault in 1937, Bender and Blau stated:

> These children undoubtedly do not deserve completely the cloak of innocence with which they have been endowed by moralists, social reformers and legislators...these children were distinguished as unusually charming and attractive in their outward personalities. Thus it was not remarkable that frequently we considered the possibility that the child might have been the actual seducer, rather than the one innocently seduced (Bender and Blau, 1937:512).

Clearly, Bender and Blau believed children had some responsibility for sexual abuse. This stance was not unusual at the time and reflected cultural beliefs that either denied the existence of abuse altogether or castigated children for sexually enticing adults (Forward and Buck, 1978).

As society began to reframe and then ignore sexual abuse and family violence in general, sexologists, applying medical models, focused on adult sexual experiences. Part of the documentation of sexual behaviors, fantasies and desires included depictions of sexual interactions between adults and children. Most notable of these accounts were the pathbreaking Kinsey reports of the 1940s and 1950s. According to Kinsey (1948), at that point in history, one in sixteen girls was sexually abused during childhood. Weinberg (1955) also studied sexual behavior. He found an extremely low rate of father-daughter incest, placing the number at one or two cases per million households. When attention did focus on sexual abuse at this historical

juncture, it was on child molestation outside the home. None of the work by Kinsey, Masters and Johnson or other sexologists in the 1940s and 1950s led to either a public reaction to sexual abuse or to a definition of a social problem (Herman and Hirschman, 1977; Russell, 1986).

In 1969, child protectionists, in the form of investigators for the Children's Division of the American Humane Society examined police and child protection reports, and discovered that between 80,000 - 100,000 children were sexually abused each year (DeFrancis, 1969). Recognized by social service workers as a low estimate because of social class bias - upper or even middle class cases of incest were frequently under-reported - these numbers were nevertheless a more realistic appraisal than the one in a million estimate that had been widely quoted a decade before (Russell, 1986). DeFrancis' report is generally considered the starting point of the modern "discovery" of child sexual abuse (Brownmiller, 1975; Thomas, 1985). Two elements made DeFrancis' findings significant - he revealed what was defined as a widespread incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse and indicated that emotional damage was created by sexual victimization. Six more years would pass, however, before feminists, the initial "discoverers," would begin to develop an arena for naming sexual abuse a social problem.

The Feminist Construction: The Discourse on Violence

As discussed in Chapter 4, Susan Brownmiller wrote a history of rape in 1975 and included a brief discussion of child sexual abuse. Several facts about Brownmiller's analysis were essential for later discussions of children's sexual victimization. Brownmiller wrote from a well-defined feminist perspective, linking the abuse of women and children, thereby bringing children's experience into an already existing social movement which had the attention of claimsmakers and the media. Another important aspect of Brownmiller's work was her analysis of child sexual abuse as a form of rape. Since rape was defined as devastating, this dramatic, and debated characterization meant that sexual abuse could, in this discourse, only be understood as harmful (Sanford, 1980; Ward, 1985). Brownmiller's framework also signaled the fact that, for feminists, of all perspectives - liberal, radical or socialist, the discourse on child sexual abuse would be a discourse about violence, and the silence it would break was one about men's use of force and sexual coercion to maintain social control and order within the family. Other claimsmakers' definitions would later converge on the issue of harm done to the child and would produce a unique aspect of the modern "discovery" of child sexual abuse - the emphasis on and construction of the psychologically victimized and "damaged child."

Brownmiller's perceptions of children's victimization were based, in large part, on the work of Florence Rush (Brownmiller, 1975). A social worker by training, Rush did extensive historical research on child sexual abuse which she began to publish in 1977. In a now well rehearsed, but then heretical and revolutionary argument, Rush stated that Freud had created the oedipal theory so as to deny the existence and extent of sexual abuse among his patients. Rush saw Freud's rejection of what he called the "seduction theory" as a move to protect men's power over women and children (Rush, 1977). The twin ideas of sexual abuse as rape and patriarchally induced silence formed the basis of feminist constructions that were to follow (Butler, 1978; Bass and Thornton, 1983). Brownmiller's analysis became the initial narrative which other discourses would reverberate and echo or rebuke and muffle.

Beginning in 1978 a series of books and articles were published which revealed the widespread occurrence of sexual abuse and its frequently traumatic aftermath. Four major works, now identified as classics in the field, (Courtois, 1988) were distributed that year. These books were: Sandra Butler's Conspiracy of Silence, Karen Mieselman's Incest, Louise Armstrong's Kiss Daddy Goodnight and Forward and Buck's Betrayal of Innocence. Emerging from feminist (Butler and Armstrong) and clinical (Forward and Buck, and Mieselman) perspectives, these

writings sounded similar themes: child sexual abuse, including incest, was much more prevalent than previously documented; patriarchal social structure had produced a systematic silence about the problem; children who were sexually abused by adults, particularly parents, experienced a form of betrayal which caused them, as they grew up, to mistrust intimacy and avoid relationships.

Armstrong's compilation of personal narratives, Kiss Daddy Goodnight, was the first publicly shared account of personal experiences of sexual assault. Followed closely by Katherine Brady's Father's Days (1979), Armstrong's book marked a turning point in the sexual abuse literature. In such works as Daddy's Girl (1980) by Charlotte Vale Allen, Voices in the Night (1980) edited by Toni McNarron and Yarrow Morgan, and I Never Told Anyone (1983) edited by Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton, victims come forward to speak about sexual abuse in their own words. These narrative, confessional accounts, acted as a powerful catharsis and frequently were directed toward others who had been sexually abused. The power of this form of speech is illustrated by Katherine Brady (1979:211) who wrote in her conclusion:

> I've learned a great deal by telling my story. I hope other incest victims may experience a similar journey of discovery by reading it. If nothing else, I would wish them to hear in this tale the two things I needed most, but had to wait years to hear: you are not alone and you are not to blame.

Personal accounts of sexual abuse were deeply tied to the feminist belief in revealing the political nature of individual experience (Evans, 1979). And, the feminist understanding of the political/personal connection inherent in sexual abuse was also evident in the way in which they described the problem and advocated solutions. My interview subjects who came from a feminist perspective were deeply concerned with issues of power, patriarchy and sexuality - issues they identified as deeply private and overarchingly public. One woman who had worked in the anti-rape and battering movements stated:

> In looking at male power over women it is clear that women and children are in positions of subordination. Because of this they (women and children) find themselves dominated and afraid. They have the same experiences of a patriarchal culture.

All of the feminists I interviewed asserted that American culture legitimates male power over women and children. One woman commented:

> Almost 30 years ago the Kinsey report made it clear that many female children were sexually abused (one in four women had stated that they had had a sexual experience with an adult by the age of 12 (Kinsey, et. al). No one paid attention. It's just too normal an event so the society doesn't pay attention - it would be like explaining why American families watch so much television - it's just there.

Like constructionists from the clinical and child protection perspectives, feminists also pointed to the ordinariness of men who sexually victimize children. A

feminist who had become very active in sexual abuse prevention programs noted:

> Society gives men permission to rape children and women. When I teach kids how to be safe I have to find a way to communicate to them that sexual abusers aren't monsters or even strangers. They're people they see everyday - grandfathers, fathers, uncles, priests, policemen. It's the ordinariness of the perpetrators that makes this such a problem.

Feminists perceive the commonplace nature of sexual abuse to rest on the powerlessness of children relative to adults and the secrecy of sexual abuse:

> Family cultures are based on speech and touch. Adults are bigger and stronger than kids are. They can coerce children into secrecy by threatening them or even by telling the kid that it (the sexual abuse) constitutes a special relationship between the two of them that shouldn't be talked about because the mom or other siblings will be jealous.

In keeping with the emphasis on secrecy and silence found in the feminist discourse the feminists I interviewed all stressed the importance of believing children's account of sexual abuse. These are the kinds of statements I heard:

* Credibility is the most important gift we can give children. Just to believe their version of reality is a tremendous advance.
* When we first started to work in this area in 1980 no one said they worked on incest issues- it was taboo - it was like it didn't exist. But now (1986) we believe children are being sexually

abused and so we trust their accounts of what daddy is doing to them.

* Children don't lie about sexual abuse. How could they? They can't have the sexual knowledge unless they've been abused. How else could they know what an adult male looks like or tastes like or what color semen is?

Part of the feminist insistence that children be listened to and believed emanated from a concern about the long-term impact of sexual abuse. Many of these women had been victimized as children and/or as adults and defined these events as the most powerful one's of their lives:

> I've been doing work in the area of family violence for nine years. I was abused by my grandfather and when I grew up I vowed that I wouldn't be a victim anymore. I think that I will be scarred for life, but I see being sexually abused as similar to being burned. By working with kids today I can soothe the burn- it's almost like a salve.

An interesting, and frequently neglected aspect of the feminist discourse on sexual abuse has been the impact of violence on adult female sexuality. The feminist prevention expert I talked to who had a background in feminist theory and psychology, discussed this issue at length:

> People today are more aware of diverse sexualities. It's no secret that many women are lesbians and many men are gay. One thing I've thought about a lot in the past couple of years is how feminism has opened us up to talk about sexuality in a totally different way then we have before. All of the discussions about pleasure

> and danger and the complexities of sexual identity are very interesting. But one thing I wonder about is how all of this violence - and not just sexual abuse, but rape and battering too - affects women's sexuality. Don't you think many women are lesbians today because of the violence they've experienced? I do and I think many of these women, and I guess heterosexual women too, struggle with sexuality. I don't mean to downplay the fact that sexual violence is violence, but it also is sexual, so it has to have an impact on how we think about sex and how and who we are sexually.

Linking the Feminist and Clinical Discourses

Feminist concern with the impact of sexual abuse helped to focus attention on self, identity and the psychological suffering that most victims reported. These concerns provided a link between the feminist and clinical constructions of sexual abuse. Both groups strongly advocated recognition of the negative, prolonged impact of sexual victimization, which the personal narratives documented. And, if the victims' accounts of their abuse helped feminists make the connection between the personal and political, they also fit with therapeutic belief in the "talking cure" which rests on the telling of one's story. This shared framework forged a strong link between portions of the two discourses.

An additional tie existed between feminist and clinical discourses. This connection arose partially because some feminists were also clinicians working with adult women who reported both current and past experiences

of sexual violence. These clinicians developed an analysis of gender/generational inequality. Judith Herman, a psychiatrist who wrote Father-Daughter Incest (1981:4) represented the clinician as feminist. She wrote:

> Father-daughter incest is not only the type of incest most frequently reported, but also represents a paradigm of female sexual victimization. The relationship between father and daughter, adult male and female child, is one of the most unequal relationships imaginable. It is no accident that incest occurs most often precisely in the relationship where the female is most powerless. The actual sexual encounter may be brutal or tender, painful or pleasurable; but it is always, inevitably, destructive to the child.

Herman's feminist and clinical orientations informed each other and organized her analysis. This mutual influence was echoed by a feminist clinician I interviewed. Having spent ten years in practice, this Ph.D. Psychologist observed:

> My graduate program prepared me to work with a variety of problems and issues, but I was never prepared for the number of clients I began to see who had been sexually abused. I talked to my colleagues and found out that they too were seeing many women who were telling stories of sexual abuse. Although my clinical training didn't prepare me for this - I guess I would call it an onslaught of sexual abuse survivors - my feminism did. I was able to use my clinical understanding to understand the psychological issues and a feminist framework to analyze why so much sexual abuse occurs in American society.

A second version of the connection between feminists and clinicians were feminists who became clinicians because of their belief that women were being maltreated by the Freudian influenced fields of psychiatry, psychology and

social work. Feminists who became clinicians brought an analysis of patriarchal social structure to their work and writings about child sexual abuse. An example of this point of view is documented by Susan Penfold and Gillian Walker (1983:156) who wrote:

> Freud's theory of infantile sexuality both reflects and reinforces the assumption that incestuous feelings are within the child and influence adults. The little girl incest victim is portrayed as seductive, aggressive, manipulative and lying.

Jean Baker Miller, a noted Psychiatrist who had written the pathbreaking Towards a New Psychology of Women, commented in a discussion of sexual violence:

> The reality is that we all were taught Freudian ideas. I never heard of incest in my own training - except for learning that Freud made that mistake, then recovered a year later and reconstructed his theory. Because we were well trained, we never believed stories of incest when we heard them...The change has come from women pressing on the profession, and from a few heroines within the profession. They struggled hard - often with a lot of courage - to challenge their colleagues and question longstanding theories which everyone honored (Herman, 1984, p. 8).

Male centered knowledge, according to these feminists, had produced a world view in which women and children's experiences were either invisible, or where women and children were seen as causing men to act in violent ways, such as sexually abusing children (Rich, 1980). Not all feminists claimsmakers were clinicians, however, and not all clinical claimsmakers were feminists. A purely feminist, anti-clinical discourse emerged within a broader

context of exploring male violence against women and children.

The framework for feminist analyses of sexual abuse was primarily taken from analyses of other social problems - particularly rape and battering. Based on the study of power and inequality, the work of these claimsmakers grew out of their emphasis on what was perceived as the violence toward women inherent in heterosexual relationships (Griffin, 1971; Ward, 1985). Constructions from this perspective put institutionalized power and violence at the center of their work. In addition, they defined the family as a politically charged, oppressive institution, resting on patriarchal social relations (Ward, 1985). The very structure of the family was seen as leading to the domination of children and creation of an environment where intrafamilial sexual abuse occurred.

Feminist discussions of extrafamilial abuse were framed by expanding this analysis and looking to the ways in which adult power and childhood powerlessness are features of all social institutions (Butler, 1978). By framing their construction in the language of domination and subordination, feminists unravelled the ways in which sexual victimization is seamlessly woven into the fabric of everyday life. This view tied the institutional, structural power men have over children--who are seen as fathers' property--and gender socialization processes which

sanction aggression in boys, and blur, even erase, the lines between violent behavior and normative male behavior. Elizabeth Ward (1985:4) captures this point of view in her work Father-Daughter Rape:

> Father-daughter sexual union is implicitly sanctioned, from the Bible to the latest movie-star marriage. When this is integrated with the fact that an enormous number of girl-children are raped by men within their own families, then the reality of existence for the daughter becomes plain. To be born female is to be a (potential) rape victim, from that moment on. Girl babies are raped. Girl toddlers are raped. Girl children are raped. And grown women are raped.

From the feminist discourse, several central claims emerged: men sexually abuse large numbers of girls; far from being aberrant, this is a commonplace aspect of women's oppression in a gender stratified society; and sexual abuse is, at best, negative and worst, tortuous, for children. These claims were frequently discussed and debated in the clinical discourse.

The Clinical Construction: The Discourse on Trauma

While feminists were focusing on child sexual abuse as a distortion of power and a form of rape, and victims were beginning to document their experiences, clinicians attended to the family dynamics which they believed produced incest. The role reversal of daughters and mothers - where mothers were physically or emotionally absent from their families and daughters became their mother's replacement in the household division of labor and

in bed - became the central paradigm for clinically understanding child sexual abuse. As a therapist focusing on child and family issues told me:

> We (a local social service agency) see many families where the daughter has essentially become the mother. Sometimes I think it's real erie when the daughter looks so much like the mom - it's like the father/husband sees them as the same person. He's blurred the boundaries between the adult and the child and then he acts on his distortion. He puts the daughter in the mom's role in the family system.

Two foci of the clinical literature have been: the analysis of presenting symptoms which act as clues that a client has been sexually abused; and the construction of a traumatic stress theory for understanding the immediate and lasting effects of abuse (Courtois, 1988).

Symptoms which act as indicators of abuse are wide ranging and inclusive. Lists usually consist of the following types of "problems:"

> Unusual knowledge and/or interest in sexual acts or terminology in relationship to the child's age and developmental stage; increased fears or needs for reassurance; regression, such as returning to thumb sucking, baby-talk, crying excessively, withdrawing into fantasy worlds; running away from home; skipping school; use of alcohol or drugs; sudden loss or increase in appetite; enuresis; complaints of pain around the genitals; and pregnancy; National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, 1981).

These signs of behavioral, physical or emotional changes were intended to help clinicians identify the hidden sexual abuse victim. Physical abuse, was believed to have clear, readable signs of maltreatment - signs that were, however,

sometimes misinterpreted or ignored when they were attributed to the family - which made it a medical problem. Sexual abuse, in contrast, was seen as a problem which required therapeutic decoding. One clinician who worked with children who were in the process of revealing their sexual abuse experience for the first time commented:

> Physical abuse is easier to document because you can see it. In cases of sexual abuse you have to get kids to talk and that's difficult. It's important for clinicians to be able to assess sexual abuse cases. I always look for feelings of: shame, fear, a sense of guilt, self-destructiveness, insecurity and isolation. These are symptoms of a lot of problems, but I see them so often in sexually abused children that that's what I think of first.

Part of the therapeutic decoding was in finding analogous traumas from which to make comparative generalizations, and construct diagnostic categories. The feminist rape crisis movement and feminist clinicians who treated rape victims had embraced the idea that sexually assaulted women had psychological experiences which matched those of concentration camp survivors, accident victims, natural disaster victims and war veterans who had "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder." Bearing the medical legitimacy of Psychiatry's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (American Psychiatric Association, 1987), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was identified as:

> ...the clinical manifestation of problems associated with trauma induced during the catastrophe and represented by the post-traumatic stress reactions.

Post Traumatic Stress reactions are a:

> set of conscious and unconscious behaviors and emotions associated with dealing with the memories of the stresses of the catastrophe and immediately afterwards (Figley, 1985; Courtois, 1988).

The complex of symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress may include:

> recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event; recurrent nightmares; a vivid sense of the event recurring again; inability to concentrate; feeling of estrangement and detachment from others; constricted emotional responses; restlessness, nervousness, irritability and emotional lability (American Psychiatric Association, 1987).

The use of the Post Traumatic designation, and language for child sexual abuse cases was widely adapted by clinicians, family violence scholars, the New Right, child protectionists and feminists. In the trauma construction, sexual abuse is understood as a catastrophic event, with serious repercussions throughout the victim's life cycle.

As a victim/client focused narrative, the clinical discourse embraced many of the post World War II developments in psychological theory. John Bowlby's (1958) theories on attachment, separation and loss, as well as Heinz Kohut's (1971; 1977) development of Self-Psychology, and the work of the British Object Relations School (Winnicott, 1965; Fairbairn, 1952), riveted attention on the quality of relationships between infants and/or children and their caretakers. Clinicians used these theories of ideal development to measure the psychological

state of sexual abuse victims. Conceptualized as a developmental issue, child sexual abuse became a problem of the self, and of identity. (This was clearly seen in the creation of the identity of "survivor" that was constructed by a joint effort of feminists, clinicians and the mass media and that will be discussed in Chapter 6.) All of the clinicians I talked to spent a great deal of time thinking about the impact of sexual abuse on a developing sense of self. Their concerns were voiced in the following statements:

* The problem of incest is the hurt of the secret. It creates a self-concept based on the idea of badness. As an adult if a person never deals with the abuse she becomes a shell of a person, a person without a sense of self.
* When parents are the abusers the amount of trauma a child experiences is greatly increased. Not only is the child physically violated, but its a psychological violation as well - a betrayal. This can lead to a fragmented sense of self for the sexually abused child.
* The most severe cases of sexual abuse I treat (a therapist working in a community setting) are complicated by the fact that the mother is somehow involved. Not necessarily that the mother is doing the sexual abuse, but somehow she

is permitting it to go on. Some of these children are so shattered by the absence of parental care that they become multiple personalities. We used to think that there were very few multiple personalities in the country. As we uncovered layers of sexual abuse we also began to recognize more and more multiple personalities and the relationship between the two.

* Sexual abuse is a sign of a maladaptive life on the part of the perpetrator and the entire family. It produces maladapted kids who, without treatment, will grow up to produce more problematic children and families. Entire generations of families are psychologically ruined by this.

* Sexually abused children are stigmatized and isolated. They get coerced into silence. As they develop they have a sense of themselves as damaged. They blame themselves and grow up believing something is terribly wrong with them. They have low self-esteem and have impaired capacities to form meaningful attachments.

To legitimate claims of trauma, as well as other issues, feminist, clinicians and subsequently, child protectionists relied on the expertise of the emerging,

academically recognized and often federally funded study of family violence.

Family Violence Research

Early in the 1970s sociological and psychological research into family violence became popular, after having been ignored for decades. Examining the sociological literature, O'Brien (1971) had reported that between 1939 and 1969 there was not a single article with the word violence in the title published in sociology's leading journal on the topic of marriage and the family. Until the women's movement and the battered child's movement made violence within families visible, scholars took their analytic category of the companionate marriage not as an ideal type, but as a description of reality. Starting in the 1970s, however, family violence became a topic of extensive theory and research. By the end of the 1980s several new academic journals and many newsletters had appeared devoted primarily to violence against women and children including: Victimology: An International Journal; Child Abuse and Neglect; Response; Connections: In the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse; and The Interpersonal Journal of Family Violence, to name a few. Tied to this literary explosion came a wide array of empirical research, and social service programs, on

battering, physical abuse, marital rape and child sexual abuse.

David Finkelhor, whose work has been influenced by pioneering family violence scholars Straus and Gelles, was the first sociologist to systematically focus on child sexual abuse. His 1979 book, Sexually Victimized Children, was pathbreaking in the documentation and understanding of abuse. Conducting a study of 796 college students, Finkelhor discovered that 19% of women and 9% of men had been sexually abused before they were 13. In this and subsequent work (1984; 1986) Finkelhor elaborated an analysis of gender socialization, social isolation, income and generational inequalities linked to child sexual abuse.

Another major figure in sociological research of family violence, Diana Russell, has produced the most systematic and generalizable survey of women sexually abused as children (1986). Russell's findings reinforce those of Finkelhor and speak to the widespread incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse and the social factors which put girls at risk. Importantly, Russell's study is widely quoted and treated by others in the field of sexual abuse as objective evidence of the conditions of a social problem.

As exemplified by Finkelhor and Russell, family violence scholars participated as claimsmakers in the discovery of sexual abuse. This was true to the degree

that they were not only documenting the existence of sexually abused children, but were advocating and reinforcing the view that the abuse of children be identified as a social problem. Designing research agendas aimed at procuring government support also made sociologists claimants in the activity of social problem construction (Finkelhor, 1986).

Part of the sociological claim about child sexual abuse was that it shared characteristics with other forms of family violence, but differed in some ways because of the unique form of trauma induced by sexual assault (Finkelhor, 1985; Tierney and Corwin, 1983). Battered women were seen as the victims of gendered violence caused by traditional socialization practices, male aggression and dominance and family roles. Physical abuse of children was identified as a problem of generational inequality, which was confounded by the fact that adults had culturally legitimate power over children that was sometimes maintained by physical force.

Unlike physical discipline, sexual interactions between adults and children in contemporary American culture, were never part of legitimate social relations. Sexual abuse was therefore viewed as a different, more extreme problem than physical abuse. Children's sexual victimization was defined as a psychologically devastating, socially isolating, physically coercive event

which occurred primarily at the instigation of adult relatives within the home. Sociologists used their research on this population to document the extent of the problem, to identify its legacy within families (which was seen in the generations of sexually abused children within individual families) to propose research agendas and to offer policy solutions (Russell, 1986; Finkelhor, 1986). The work of these scholars served as claims and found its way into the claimsmaking activities of the other constructionists, including child protectionists who viewed children as an endangered population.

The Child Protection Response: The Discourse on Childhood

The world which family violence researchers were documenting was not unfamiliar to child protectionists who had a long history of intervening on behalf of children and who had been instrumental in uncovering the physical abuse of children. Emerging from the tradition of early 20th century child savers, these child advocates came primarily from the fields of social work, public health nursing and pediatrics. In the 1960s, along with pediatric radiologists, child protectionists had found widespread physical abuse of children which they had identified as the "battered child syndrome" (Helfer and Kempe, 1968; Pfhol, 1977). Treating physically abused children and their families, child protectionists began to hear many accounts

of sexual abuse. In Lansing, Michigan this connection between physical and sexual abuse led in 1975 to the creation of a Community Mental Health project focused on treating the entire family system. The Lansing model was based on the highly publicized Parents United model which had been developed in California by Giaretto and diffused throughout the country.

When I began to interview individuals who had been prominent in the field of child sexual abuse in Lansing over and over again I was directed to three women who initiated and then ran the Community Mental Health Project. A child rights activist, a psychologist and a family studies expert, these women each made significant and lasting contributions to how child sexual abuse is dealt with by local community structures. In my discussions with each of them I was interested in how they understood children's sexual victimization and how that understanding served as the underpinning for services.

According to the activist, who in the mid-1970s was working with physically abused children:

> The earliest documentation of incest in Lansing was in 1976-1977. Then in 1977-1978 there was a dramatic increase in the number of incest cases reported. These cases were reported by the children themselves. We (the treatment team) made a conscious decision to believe the children. At the same time we also decided to view incest and extrafamilial child sexual abuse as primarily mental health problems. I was particularly concerned that the entire family enter treatment and that whatever rupture had occurred within the family be healed. The key

> here really wasn't the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim - even when the perpetrator was the father. The key was between the mother and the victim. The mother's ability to bond with child was a clear indicator of how much trauma the child would continue to experience.

These views were echoed by the psychologist who added other dimensions of concern:

> Children who are sexually abused in the home are frequently put in a position where they experience role reversal - they must become the mother. These families are dysfunctional and cause their family members to be destructive and/or victimized. I'm concerned that we are moving toward a formula in sexual abuse circles that says - kids who have been fondled are not as bad off as kids who have experienced anal or vaginal penetration. I think that a child who is fondled by her father is in a bad family situation and that this type of family also needs treatment.

The family studies expert made the same points about dysfunctional family units and the importance of treating whole families. She gave an interesting perspective on victims and perpetrators:

> Adolescent perpetrators and victims have tended to be ignored - particularly perpetrators. Part of this is that adolescents are seen as sexually charged individuals who do some experimentation. Because we're uncomfortable with this we tend to try to ignore adolescent sexuality altogether. This is going to backfire on the mental health profession - we're going to have adolescent victims who grow up to experience other types of family violence and adolescent perpetrators who grow up to be the agents of that violence. Adolescents may be in the process of separating from their families, but they still need to be treated with the rest of the family.

As evidenced by these experts, child protectionists viewed family problems as interrelated, and focused on

incest. They did not embrace the feminist definition of incest as a crime of rape. In fact feminists and child protectionists frequently disagreed not only on definitions, but also on the treatment of perpetrators within a therapeutic as opposed to criminal context. The definition of individual families as pathological was a definition which overlapped with the clinical construction and pointed to the use of a medical model and a belief in the idea that abuse occurred in sick, dysfunctional families. Placing sexual abuse outside of normal patterns produced by gender socialization and male dominance, led child protectionists to see the family as a therapeutic client or patient (Giaretto, 1982). This view allowed the protectionists to provide services - a cure - to sexually abused children and their families within the existing framework of social service agencies. One woman I interviewed who had a master's degree in public health and a bachelor's degree in nursing and who worked in a local multi-service agency voiced a unique perspective on child sexual abuse:

> I see the community as the real client in cases of sexual abuse. How are these families going to function as good citizens and decent human beings if we don't treat them? We have to look at the myths that have made us blind to sexual abuse and I mean incest especially. We only thought sexual abuse occurred in Appalachia and in low income families. Now (1986) we know it happens everywhere to anyone. Only by facing the reality can we heal individuals, families and communities. Social service agencies are the key to treating and eradicating sexual abuse.

Availability of services in turn helped to legitimate the claim that sexual abuse was a social problem and aided the establishment of an industry catering to professionals who treated victims. Books, toys, games and anatomically correct dolls comprised the basic commodities of this market which emerged rapidly and with great success (Crewdson, 1988).

While protectionists enjoyed the popularity and legitimacy accorded mainstream child welfare endeavors, they also experienced a significant conflict in their claimsmaking activities. In uncovering the physical abuse of children in the late 1960s and early 1970s child protectionists had aligned themselves with physicians (Nelson, 1984; Kempe and Kempe, 1984). The profession of medicine had been unambivalent about the problem of battered children and had benefited from the influx of patients (Pfhol, 1977). Sexual abuse proved to be a different type of problem for several reasons. First, unlike physical abuse, sexual abuse frequently occurred without leaving physical signs. Those symptoms which sometimes appeared - including anything from rectal tears to venereal disease - were mostly overlooked or attributed to other causes. Without a clearly delineated physical dimension, sexual abuse was defined as outside the professional boundaries of most medical specialties.

Secondly, the one specialty within medicine that could

have addressed the dynamics of child sexual abuse, psychiatry, had been at the forefront of the cultural denial of the problem since the 1890s. Psychiatry symbolized the convergence of social forces which had acted to silence children's sexual victimization (Rush, 1977; Masson, 1984; Finkelhor, 1984). The role psychiatry has taken in the construction of child sexual abuse as a social problem has been debated from within the profession. According to Roland Summitt (American Psychiatric News, March 18, 1988:18), an oft quoted psychiatric expert on child sexual abuse:

> Child sexual abuse has divided psychiatrists since the beginning of psychiatry, and it has not been along analytic, behavioral, neurological or biochemical lines...Psychoanalysts, for example, are not more resistant to believing that sexual abuse has occurred than are other psychiatrists...people who don't consider themselves psychoanalytically or psychodynamically oriented, people who ordinarily are indifferent or reactive to Freud still accept the elementary assumptions of psychoanalytic theory when confronted with a suspected sexually abused child.

A third mitigating factor which prevented physicians from participating in claimsmaking activities about sexual abuse until relatively late was the nature of the problem itself. While physicians had rarely been accused of physically assaulting a patient, some physicians had been accused of sexually abusing patients. Many analyses of these assaults had used the paradigm of incest to explain the process of physician/patient sexual interactions (Penfold and Walker, 1983). Given this configuration, it

is not surprising that the medical response to child sexual abuse was slow. In fact, while other professions began focusing on sexual abuse in conferences and workshops in the 1970s, it took until 1983 for the American Medical Association to have a conference focused on the topic of sexual abuse (AMA, 1988).

Medicine's limited reaction to the problem meant that protectionists had lost a strong partner in the construction process. For the social problem itself the absence of medical legitimation meant that a powerful force of political lobbying and organization was absent (Newburger and Bourne, 1978). Although political, medical and legal forces did ultimately join forces to advocate for the sexually abused child - primarily in debates about children testifying about abuse in front of accused perpetrators - there was never the sustained, integrated approach to sexual abuse that occurred for physically abused children (Nelson, 1984).

The New Right: The Discourse on Sexuality and the Family

As feminists, clinicians and protectionists focused on abuse of children, the New Right also began to mobilize on behalf of the young. Conceptualizing sexual assault as one element in contemporary society's degradation of traditional moral values, The Child Protection Alert, a newspaper of the Christian Voice Foundation, an evangelical

New Right group, gave the following description of what it defined as "the war on children" in 1985:

> The war on children is a battle that is currently raging across this country. If you already know that, if you already understand the true torture and suffering than do not read this section. However, most Americans do not realize how terrible child abuse is. They do not believe that the pain and the death are real. If you are one of those people who is not convinced that children in America are suffering not only from hunger and cold, but from real physical pain and death at the hands of those who should be showing them love, then read this whole article and read the footnotes (Child Protection Alert, 1985).

The vision of the endangered child pervades the New Right's discourse on child sexual abuse. Torture and/or death, were presented as almost inevitable outcomes both of incest and abuse by strangers. Abuse within families was defined by the New Right as the worst kind of violence that occurred in society. Part of the power of incest rested in its generational continuity; a legacy identified by the right as a form of "parasitic aggression." Like clinicians, the New Right believed incest emanated from the mother's absence in the family due to social or work obligations which gave unspoken permission for a sexual relationship between the father and daughter (Data Center, 1981). Interestingly, the father was depicted as a past sexual abuse victim who had been deprived of a "wholesome" family in which to grow up and learn appropriate cultural norms about parent-child interactions (Viguerie, 1981). He was the victim and the mother was the perpetrator. This

theme of the father's being victimized and mother not protecting her children came up frequently in my interviews with representatives of the New Right. A member of a local church organization seemed to be speaking for many on the Right when she said:

> Women work so much today because they want the material rewards which come from economic success. It's like they care more about what they wear and how nice their cars are then they do about their husbands and children. Everyone knows that men need help when it comes to children. If the husband/father has had a past that included sexual abuse he is likely to do the same to his children. The wife has to act as a brake on his potential to abuse. He can't help but repeat what he has learned.

A major topic in the New Right's discourse has been its emphasis on sexual abuse within day care centers. Child care outside of the home led, in the eyes of the Right, to increased vulnerability to child pornographers, child molesters and child stealers. By linking these types of abuse together, the perception of a child in danger in the world outside the home was heightened. The New Right labeled all forms of child abuse moral perversions, and day care centers came to represent the bankruptcy of American values (Viguerie, 1981). Symbolizing the desertion of mothers from the family, day care centers were identified as focal points for the abuse of children. When the McMartin story appeared in 1983 and employees of the day care center were charged with sexually abusing hundreds of children over a ten year period, the

New Right seized upon it as evidence of normative conditions in the industry and demanded child care centers be closed (Crewdson, 1988).

Emphasis on day care abuse pitted the New Right squarely against feminists' understandings of children, child abuse and day care centers. Feminists viewed the problem of sexual abuse as an issue of inequality; the New Right defined it as a crisis wrought by the day care industry. Because the Right's focus was an attack on the women's movement, which it perceived had encouraged women to leave the home, and therefore had made children vulnerable, feminists responded directly against these claims by producing a number of articles for the feminist press, including Off Our Backs (1986), and Sojourner (1987). According to feminist-clinician Linda Sanford (1987:13):

> ...the focus on child sexual abuse in day care is really a backlash against women's rights, and particularly working women. It's been interesting to me as a clinician in the field for 12 years that all along we knew there was child sexual abuse on military bases. We also knew that many pedophiles gravitated toward Big Brother, Little League, Boy Scouts, different kinds of organizations where they could have a lot of access and a lot of power over kids. And we never talked about closing down those kinds of organizations.

While feminists published in their own newspapers, the New Right had access to the mainstream media, including television stations they owned. Day care abuse cases became common place on news programs and specials. The

McMartin case, for instance, was not only publicized for weeks on television network news programs, in the large urban presses, but also was given special 15-20 minute segments on programs like "20/20," and the "Phil Donahue Show." Incest cases rarely received the same amount of attention - although Katherine Brady, author of Father's Days did appear on Phil Donahue with her parents and discussed her father's sexual abuse of her - as more public incidents of sexual abuse did. A perception was created that more children were abused outside the home, than in the family. This perception remained despite the American Humane Society's estimate that only 1.5% of reported cases of child sexual abuse occur in settings like day care (Freedman, et. al. 1987).

Part of the Right's analysis of children's sexual victimization was integrated into discussions about, and agitation for, the plight of missing children. This public concern began in 1979 with the disappearance of Etan Patz- a six year old New York boy abducted on his way to school. It was heightened by the first of the Atlanta child murders, which would ultimately result in the death of 28 children; and the abduction and murder of Adam Walsh in Florida. In the wake of these events New Right and media attention increasingly focused on the kidnapping of children by strangers. As estimates of the problem escalated - the number of missing children in 1981 was

placed at between 1.3 and 1.8 million - the New Right joined forces with the federal government to identify a "new" social problem - stranger abduction (Spitzer, 1986).

Most notable about what became known as the Missing Children's Movement was the series of erroneous ideas and facts that formed the basis of the claim that there was a problem. First, the number of missing children was inflated by collapsing statistics on runaway, homeless and missing children (Schneider, 1987). Second, although the information disseminated by various authorities, like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, argued that stranger abductions formed the bulk of missing children cases, in fact the vast majority of incidents were kidnappings by non-custodial parents in divorce cases (Schneider, 1987). Stranger abductions accounted for only 35 of the F.B.I. investigations into missing children reports in 1981 and 56 investigations in 1985 (Spitzer, 1986).

Even in the face of these small numbers, the perception of an epidemic of child abductions was fueled by placing pictures of children, presumed missing, on grocery bags, utility bills and milk cartons. From this campaign came a mass effort to fingerprint children, put computer chips in their teeth, and other varieties of tracking devices. The Michigan Department of Education along with the state's Attorney General's office created a "Child Find

Kit" which it described as "invaluable should your child be missing." Offering to distribute the kit to all children in schools, the department also gave parents advice on how to create their own kits. According to the Education department, a kit should have:

> A recent clear, color photograph of your child (take a new one at least once per year); fingerprints and footprints; birth certificate; photograph of all scars, birthmarks, deformities; dental and medical records; lock of hair; physical description, including height, weight, color of eyes and hair; sample of handwriting; a recording of the child's voice; and a complete family history - paternal and maternal. (Michigan Department of Education and the Office of the Attorney General, 1985).

The Missing Children's movement effectively marketed these types of safety techniques and established an overarching belief that children were endangered outside the home and that their activities had to be controlled by adults. This was true despite an Pulitze Prize winning expose written for the Denver Post in May, 1985 which received national television and newspaper coverage, and revealed the fact that the Missing Children's Movement's claims about abducted children were a fabrication (Denver Post, 1985). Ironically, at the same time that evidence mounted that children were <u>not</u> in great danger of stranger abduction, the Department of Health and Human Services began funding Missing Children Demonstration Projects around the country.

Wishing to clarify the "facts" of missing children, the Office of the U.S. Attorney General organized a

commission to investigate the plight of these children. In its 1986 report entitled, America's Missing and Exploited Children: Their Safety and Their Future, the commission described the number of victims, reported types of abuse committed and provided profiles of abductors. The Justice Department's report energetically supported the need for strong families to protect children from potential dangers. Although the commission recognized family violence, even acknowledging that many children run away because of incest, the New Right interpreted the commission findings as a mandate to keep children safely in the home, away from strangers who might harm them.

In the Missing Children's Movement the New Right found the perfect chord for sounding the themes of endangerment and terror which it saw as central to the victimization of children and the moral decay of the family. Reflecting these concerns, the New Right's Child Protection Report states:

> 50,000 children are...presumed to be victims of stranger abduction, a crime of predatory cruelty usually committed by pedophiles, pornographers, black market baby peddlers or psychotics bidding desperately for parenthood. Only a few cases are solved. Even fewer stranger abducted children are recovered alive (Child Protection Alert, 1985).

By linking the problems of sexual abuse, stranger abduction, child pornography and child murder together, the New Right was able to argue for the protection of children within the sanctity of the family. In particular,

child pornography, which had been mentioned by one of the child protectionists I interviewed was discussed at length by all five of the subjects from the New Right. Their concerns were highlighted by the following comments:

* Children are not being cared for by their mothers and are being exploited in pornographic films, books and magazines. Children who are exposed in this way are lost to prostitution and drug abuse.
* Child pornography is a vast industry in the U.S. and internationally. Sexual abuse and "kiddie porn" come from the same problem - the disintegration of family values in America.
* Pornography is a growing problem in cities and suburbs. Children are being kidnapped and used in pornographic videos. Their lives are ruined before they even begin. How are we going to protect the children from this kind of filth?

Part of the New Right's argument about pornography and abduction - things that were believed to happen outside of families - was aimed at what they saw as the exaggerated emphasis on incest which feminists, clinicians and protectionists had produced. Fighting the assault on the family, a number of New Right evangelical Christian groups organized chapters of Victims of Child Abuse Legislation (VOCAL) (Crewdson, 1988).

It was no accident that the Right chose VOCAL as the acronym for its campaign against "exaggerated claims" of sexual abuse - claims which they literally believed were voiced too loudly. Wanting a different, "more reasonable" form of speech to be heard, 120 chapters of VOCAL were organized throughout the United States. The central claim of the chapters was that children lied about sexual abuse in order to gain power over their parents. Far from the victims the "leftist" media had portrayed, children were viewed by VOCAL members as malicious perpetrators of a contemporary witch-hunt (Crewdson, 1988). VOCAL members marched on state legislatures across the country to make the public aware that their membership - comprised mostly of wives whose husbands were accused of sexual assault- were the true victims of sexual abuse.

The New Right's membership identified the emphasis on incest, and the conviction of "innocent" fathers in such cases, as part of a broader feminist and leftist agenda to destroy the American family. Paul Weyrich, one of the founding members of the New Right, identified the feminist and leftist analysis of incest and other forms of family violence as anti-family. He wondered:

> Who is behind the anti-family movement? ...those who do not believe in God, hardcore socialists, economic opportunists eager to make a buck from pornography, abortion, etc...and women's libbers who want a different political and cultural order (Viguerie, 1981:191).

At the heart of the attack on the family was children's usurping of adult authority and power. This was expressed by a member of the Michigan Chapter of V.O.C.A.L. I interviewed who was outraged by the degree of legitimacy being given to the children's reports of sexual abuse:

> Children are believed when they talk about what adults do to them sexually. And children lie! We all know children lie - every day. But we still have this social environment now that says children don't lie about sexual abuse so they should be taken seriously when they state they've been abused. Look at all the power that gives them over their parents. It's a situation where - "Daddy better not deprive me of anything or I'll accuse him of assaulting me." People think kids aren't calculating or they don't realize the power they've been given? Look at all the men who have been falsely accused of sexual abuse- and I include my husband in this - the epidemic isn't about sexually abused children. It's about honest men - falsely accused.

In order to combat the attack on the family (military language is frequently used by the New Right to describe this situation) forces from the New Right created the Family Protection Act which they then attempted to pass through Congress. Drafted by Robert Billings, Executive Director of the Moral Majority and introduced by conservative Senators Paul Laxalt and Jake Garn, first in 1979 and again in 1981, the Family Protection Act aimed to restore the family, solidify parental authority and create a climate where traditional moral values could be pursued (Schulman, 1981). This agenda could be carried out by: reinstating prayer in school; eliminating abortion rights; prohibiting minors from purchasing contraceptive devices;

curbing academic freedom; prohibiting homosexuality; and removing women from the workplace (David, 1986). Although this act never passed, the various concerns which it addressed have remained central to the New Right's platform in the 1980s and have been addressed as single issues rather than through an integrated program.

The Mass Media's Constructions of Child Sexual Abuse: The Discourse on Feelings and Facts

While feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right began their claimsmaking activities in 1975, it was not until 1984 that the mass media focused on the problem and became claimsmakers. (How this problem made the transition between the two worlds - professional/academic and public/mass media - will be covered in the next chapter.) According to an article published in Parade Magazine (1985:16):

> When they come to write the history of the decade, the scribes will surely pinpoint 1984-85 as the period in which America recognized child sexual abuse as a serious nationwide problem.

The author's evidence for attention to the problem relied on the McMartin Case, the Jordan, Minnesota Case, Senator Paula Hawkin's revelation that she had been sexually abused as a child and a report from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The Health and Human Services report was important because it solidified the perception that a social problem

existed. The report emphasized: the large number of abused children (one in every four girls; one in every nine or ten boys); the amount of incest committed in families (77% of reported sexual abuse cases); the proportion of perpetrators who were sexually abused as children; and evidence that sexual abuse happens in all social classes and is usually kept secret by the sexually abused child (Department of Health and Human Services, April 1985).

The government report had followed widespread coverage of sexual abuse on television, in newspapers and in magazines. In September of 1983, Time magazine featured child sexual abuse as a cover story; Newsweek followed in May of 1984. Reports also appeared in Life magazine (December, 1984), Psychology Today (May, 1984), Parade Magazine (July, 1984) and Family Weekly (June, 1985). Many newspapers did a week long series on child sexual abuse. For instance in Michigan, both the Detroit Free Press and the Lansing State Journal published series on incest (July 15-19, 1985). National Public Radio broadcast a week long series on child sexual abuse in April of 1984. On television, "Something About Amelia" aired in January of 1984, followed by "Kids Don't Tell" in March of 1985. Several more films aired in 1985, as did an after-school-special about child molestation in 1986.

Concentrated media attention created the perception that a new, shocking social problem was appearing. This

perception was widely shared even among "experts" - for instance, not one of my interview subjects - people actively working in the field - had any awareness of sexual abuse as an ongoing problem, with a social history. Given this ahistorical vision perpetuated by the media, an image was promoted of modern family disintegration and increasing danger--mostly outside the home. The perception grew that something was changing in the social world that made children vulnerable to adults, particularly strangers in new, sexually violent ways. Television and radio coverage of the "epidemic of sexual abuse" was very important in creating a homogenized view of the problem.

Examples from programs that were first broadcast between September of 1984 and May of 1986 show how sexual abuse was being constructed by the media in its (public) emergent phase. On September 14, 1984 Phil Donahue devoted a program to child sexual abuse. The guests that day were Senator Paula Hawkins - identified as a sexual abuse survivor; Elizabeth Holtzman - a District Attorney from New York and Roland Summitt - a psychiatrist specializing in child sexual abuse. The picture of sexual abuse painted that day was of a dramatic, desperate situation. For instance, Summitt reported that in Florida there was a gonorrhea epidemic among two year olds. Paula Hawkins stated that after she revealed that she had been abused she received 10,000 letters from people around the country-

most of these letters chronicled years of sexual abuse and of silence.

In December of 1984 Morning Edition - a radio program broadcast on National Public Radio-featured a report on sexual abuse. Interestingly, this program not only dealt with the "tragedy" of sexual abuse but also attended to its social construction. Featured on the program were Judith Herman - the feminist psychiatrist, Edward Dramond - a media critic and Steven Ronald a reporter based in Minneapolis. In a wide ranging discussion each individual focused on the media's role in creating the perception of a social problem. Herman stated:

> The media has seized on day care centers as a focal point of abuse because it's safer to talk about than abuse within the family... The ground work for this movement began in the rape crisis and battered women's movements, but the trend of focusing on abuse only developed when the media began reporting about child sexual abuse.

Dramond, the media critic pointed out the fact that the news media, which he believes is fundamentally conservative, but is usually considered liberal, had to start reporting on sexual abuse because of pressure from the women's movement. This thought was also expressed by Ronald, the reporter, who credited the film "Something About Amelia" "with forcing and enabling news organizations to deal with incest."

A segment of the ABC television news program "20/20" was devoted to sexual abuse of children in January of 1985.

This piece, entitled "Why the Silence?", was clearly focused on sexual abuse as tragedy. Using the McMartin case as an organizing point, experts like Kee Macfarlane and Roland Summit, gave long descriptions of how to identify and then treat sexual abuse victims. Macfarlane, who was the primary therapist working with the young victims in the McMartin case said:

> Every child who is sexually abused gives off silent signals. These signals include: incessant crying, acting out behavior, fear of adults and nightmares.

Summit addressed treatment and cultural issues by saying:

> Children get over sexual abuse when someone believes them. Parents need to believe their children. What we are seeing (the number of sexual abuse cases) is not an aberration. It is something that has been going on for all time. We have a chance, the privilege now to hear it or we can believe it is a fraud being perpetrated by some zealots. I think we're privileged.

Another aspect of child sexual abuse was explored on Larry King's syndicated talk show in May of 1986. Among King's guests for this program were an incest survivor who was suing her family for $600,000 - charging that incest is a type of fraud; Fred Berlin an Associate Professor of Psychiatry from Johns Hopkins University and Sam, a perpetrator of sexual abuse. The sexual abuse of men was discussed at length and Dr. Berlin declared that "men are the most silenced of all victims." Perhaps the most interesting and revealing aspect of this show was that

people from around the country could call and talk to experts about sexual abuse. One call came from a woman who said she felt "that I might have been sexually abused by a doctor when I was between the ages of five and seven." The response to this caller was immediate and without equivocation: "If she thinks it happened, it happened." Other discussions that night focused on the "fact" that incest is not a sexually motivated event; child sexual abuse exists in epidemic proportions in the U.S.; and boys are more stigmatized by the taboo of sexual abuse.

Ann Landers, the popular newspaper advice columnist, also provided a forum for sexual abuse to be discussed. During the past several years she has published a number of correspondence from readers struggling with sexual abuse. Lander's advice has directed parents to educate their children about sexual abuse, to realize that relatives are the most frequent perpetrators of abuse and to remove victims from the home. The letters Lander's receives about sexual abuse includes a wide range of problems and views. The letters tend to be from children, adolescents or young adults who are currently being victimized; experts in the field who want to share advice on prevention or treatment; and people who have either molested children for people who have ben sexually abused who want to use their experiences to either disagree or agree with particular pieces of advice. Not only does Lander's column, as well

as her sister's "Dear Abbey," give people a way to speak out about sexual abuse, it also provides newspapers with a consistent source of bold faced headlines about sexual abuse: "Don't Stay in a House with Sexually Abusive Fathers;" "Sexual Molester Often Close Relative of Child;" and "Information the Best Defense Against Abuse" are just a few examples of the headlines used in Lander's column in 1984 and 1985.

Not all the claimsmakers were pleased with this deluge of media attention. Feminists, particularly radical feminists, who had received negative press for their activities during the previous decade, reacted strongly against the mass media's attention to child sexual abuse, fearing that the media would distort its perspective. In addition, feminists were outraged at the fact that the popular media sometimes relied on perpetrators of sexual abuse to educate children about prevention strategies. Occurring in both the print media and on television, the use of offenders as experts gave men who abused children (the perpetrators who were quoted were always men), control over the definitional process, making sexual abuse a problem for male perpetrators to solve (Off Our Backs, 1986).

An additional concern of feminists was that the media did not present sexual abuse as a problem based on gender or generational inequality. Clinical or child

protectionist perspectives were more amenable to the media's view of the problem which focused on individual problems and solutions. Feminist solutions to sexual abuse rested on empowering children and reducing adult power. Clinical and child protectionists responses were aimed at restoring a protected, sentimental childhood to abused children or helping adult survivors grieve the loss of childhood (Courtois, 1988). Neither of these strategies put forth by clinicians or child protectionists required a realignment of adult-child relationships; thus, they were compatible with mainstream media reports which spoke about protection and control of children, rather than power.

Regardless of the media's perspectives, their roles in bringing child sexual abuse into public view have not been disputed. The mass media have acted as a forum for the discourses on sexual exploitation, as well as many forms of sexuality. As such, media have served as a modern, technologically advanced confessional, allowing discourses on sexuality to become public. Foucault (1980) has argued that in Western societies everything about sexuality needed, by cultural dictate, to be confessed endlessly and denied energetically. Such is the case of child sexual abuse which is focused on almost everyday in the media-either in newspaper reports about specific cases or in documentaries or special series on television, and especially on television talk shows. There is usually a

two-fold focus and tone to these reports. One aspect of the reporting is the negative judgments which define child sexual abuse in general. A second feature concerns the types and amounts of details which are provided. This reporting requires, and instructs, the reader or viewer both to think and feel that sexual abuse is awful, while absorbing many details about the sexual encounter. A good example of this phenomenon can be found in the Lansing State Journal (July 15-19, 1985). Running a five day series called, "Incest: Society's Shame" the Journal used the following paragraph as a lead each day:

> Sexual abuse of children by family members is an ancient, worldwide evil that continues to this hour. This is the (#) in a series of the horror called incest.

This introduction was followed by a specific description of an abuse case, like the following:

> I don't believe my father ever had intercourse with me, said Frances who is now 45. It was more touching, fondling and rubbing.

The instruction about the horror of incest, followed by details of an assault displays a cultural ambivalence towards children's sexual abuse - the desire to hear all within the confines of feeling outraged. The feeling gives permission for the knowledge, and requires no action or plan for social change. Outrage is simply enough; feeling becomes social action.

The dual message about feelings and facts was the main characteristic of the media's constructions of child sexual

abuse as a social problem. No matter how much attention was given to the problem, stories on sexual abuse still bore the label of "shocking" or "secret." In 1989, for instance, following five years of extensive coverage of sexual abuse in all media, reports on sexual abuse on television news programs still begin most often with the phrase, "shocking news tonight" (For example, ABC Eyewitness News, January 15, 1989). Given the incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse and the documentation of how commonplace it is, the label of shocking can be seen as a claim that the media make about the problem. The label of shock is most often affixed when the perpetrator is an authority figure, a prominent community leader, a priest, a school principal, a boy scout leader, not a family member- so that it is the violation of the perpetrator's role that seems more shocking than the sexual abuse itself.

The medias' attention to sexual abuse is parallel to a phenomenon Sherry Turkle observed in her study of computers and the self: "What disturbs is closely tied to what fascinates and what fascinates is deeply rooted in what disturbs" (Turkle, 1984:33). Part of what has disturbed and fascinated claimsmakers in the modern construction of sexual abuse has been the short and long term effects on the victim. Concern over impact on identity has characterized all of the discourses, has been central to each narrative, and has led to the creation of prevention

programs aimed at eradicating sexual abuse. Chapter 6 examines this convergence of view points, the construction of prevention programs and explores the emergence of the "damaged child" which allowed child sexual abuse to move beyond the boundaries of professional concern to the popular culture.

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of claimsmaking activities about sexual abuse during the 1970s and 1980s. Focusing on the feminist, clinical, child protectionists and New Right constructions, I have traced the emergence of each discourse, the analysis of sexual abuse presented in each narrative and some of the sources of conflict and agreement among the claimsmakers.

CHAPTER 6

THE PROCESSES OF CONSTRUCTION: THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY, INNOCENCE, DAMAGE AND DANGER

In 1975 professional and political groups began to identify child sexual abuse as a social problem. By 1984 children's sexual victimization had become a recognized "fact" within popular culture (Finkelhor, 1984). The processes by which sexual abuse moved from the interest of experts to the province of the general public were complex. The messages delivered were simple. This chapter focuses on the ways in which the activities of claimsmakers produced the perceptions and evidence of a problem and created an environment in which the "putative condition" could be recognized by a large audience (Spector and Kitsuse, 1987). Through the cooperation and conflict of feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right four claims emerged as central constructions; these claims widened the arena in which child sexual abuse would be considered a problem. The themes were: the large number of victims; the persistent, damaging affects of sexual abuse on the identity of the victim; the need for sexual abuse prevention programs; and the loss of childhood

entailed when abuse takes place. Each of these themes helped to create a sense of urgency and legitimation around child sexual abuse as a social problem.

The Issue of Numbers

Part of the process and politics of constructing modern social problems has rested on estimating or predicting the number of people affected by a troublesome condition (Spector and Kitsuse, 1987). Simply counting the number of individuals experiencing a condition, however, does not automatically create the label of a social problem. Many people may experience a condition and not have the label "social problem" used to describe their reality, as has been historically the case with psychological or emotional abuse of children. In other instances, a relatively small number could be affected by a condition that is considered a social problem - like missing children (Best, 1987). Because the relationship between numbers and social problems is not linear, the issue has tended toward confusion both within sociology and the popular press (Manis, 1974). In their approach, social constructionists have been clear that definitional processes are the most fundamental means of creating beliefs that a problem exists. From this perspective, numbers are important only to the extent that a number of groups make claims about a condition (Schneider, 1985).

Counting Sexually Abused Children

Studies done on child sexual abuse are invariably concerned about numbers (Kempe and Kempe, 1984; Finkelhor, 1986). John Crewdson's (1988) work serves as an example of the use of numbers to legitimate the idea that sexual abuse is a social problem. Crewdson entitled the second chapter of his popular book, By Silence Betrayed, "Numbers" and began his account of "the epidemic of child sexual abuse" by quoting a survey done by the Los Angeles Times in August of 1985:

> At least 22% of Americans...have been victims of child sexual abuse, although one-third of them told no one at the time and lived with their secret well into adulthood (Crewdson, 1988:24).

Crewdson claims that the method used to acquire this data- a random phone survey - produced significant results because the respondents represented a diverse, ordinary population with a high rate of sexual abuse. These findings were significant for another reason. Of all the books written on child sexual abuse during the 1980s Crewdson's was the only one to receive a front page review by the New York Times Book Review thereby giving it notoriety and legitimacy. Crewdson was hailed for having brought national attention to the "tragedy of children's sexual victimization" (New York Times Book Review, February, 1988).

Similarly, Diana Russell, writing for a more professional audience, reported that in her interviews of

930 women living in San Francisco she had found a large number who had been sexually abused during childhood. In her account of the study, Russell (1986:10) wrote:

> One of the most shocking findings of our probability sample is that 16% of the 930 women had been sexually abused by a relative before the age of 18, and 4.5% had been sexually abused by their fathers before this age. If we extrapolate from this 16% figure to the population at large, it means that 160,000 women per million in this country may have ben incestuously abused before the age of 18, and 45,000 per million may have been victimized by their fathers.

Russell's study, emerging from the family violence perspective, has been widely cited within the clinical literature because of the quality of her method and the recording of a 16% incest incidence rate which was 4% higher than any previous report - indicating an urgent need for clinical services (Courtois, 1988).

Numbers have been important to child sexual abuse researchers and claimsmakers not only because they are interpreted as revelations of how extensive the problem is, but also because they have been used to legitimate requests for services and to agitate for policy changes. In 1985, for example, the child protectionist's National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse (1985) issued a report on sexual abuse based on a national incidence study. The results of the study showed that reports of sexual abuse had increased 35% during 1984. Spokespeople for the National Committee credited the media with the jump in reports and simultaneously claimed that the 35% increase

was "just the tip of the iceberg" (Lansing State Journal, February 17, 1985). Because the reports of sexual abuse increasing and actual number of cases increasing was frequently seen as the same issue and left unaddressed, the perception of a growing problem was fostered. Clarifying how to interpret the numbers was not in the best interest of claimsmakers since the association between large numbers of victims and a large problem was strong.

Like child protectionists, feminist claimsmakers have also entered the discussions about numbers, primarily on the topic of incest. Elizabeth Ward, for example, in Father-Daughter Rape, defined the rate of incest as "epic in proportion" (1985:3). Many other feminists have also noted what they defined as a high rate of incest, over 4% of the female population (Herman, 1981; Butler, 1978; Bass and Davis, 1988). Herman's 1981 estimate of a 12% incest prevalence rate, the highest rate being quoted at the beginning of the decade, became the most frequently quoted among feminist writers and was used as evidence of an objective problem (Russell, 1986).

Although some variations exist in the statistical information provided by feminist authors and researchers, the interpretation of the numbers do not vary. Feminists claim that the rate of incest in the United States is epidemic. This epidemic exists because it is part of the fabric of male power over women and children (Butler,

1978). These numbers were used to show that incest reflects a "normal" pattern in a culture characterized by gender and generational inequality. The feminist construction of incest, and of extrafamilial sexual molestation, rests on identifying the common occurrence of the crime and the uniqueness of the impact of child sexual abuses.

Statistics used by the New Right to support their claims about child sexual abuse as a social problem have been less consistent than those used by other claimsmakers. In part, this reflected the New Rights' ambivalence toward sexual abuse reports made by children in nuclear families. Support and credibility were more readily given to children who reported abuse in day care centers. Incest reports gained credibility only if the parents were identified as sexually permissive, that is, if they believed in reproductive freedom, sex education, etc. (Levitas, 1986). Children were often not believed if they disclosed sexual abuse when their families were identified as moral and clean (David, 1986). This was a point of dispute among the claimsmakers because the other three perspectives argued that wholesome, patriotic, religious families--rigid and authoritarian in structure--frequently were the sites where sexual abuse occurred and where children's accusations needed to be heard.

A second reason why the New Rights' statistics on sexual abuse varied more than those of other claimsmakers was because numbers were reported by collapsing categories of victimization into each other. Statistics on the prevalence of child pornography, child stealing and child sex rings were frequently given together with estimates of child sexual abuse so that it was impossible to separate out the number of children involved in each report (Spitzer, 1986). The logic of presenting all statistics on "child exploitation," a logic which no other claimsmakers followed, was to make clear that American culture had created a war on children, and women (Schlafly, 1986). According to the New Right this war was being waged by feminists and those on the political left who believed that women had a right to work outside the home and to create more equalitarian relationships within families (Gilder, 1982). Women's abdication of their roles as wives and mothers created a situation where 1.3 to 1.8 million children were assaulted each year (Spitzer, 1986).

Numbers as a Rhetoric of Rectitude

Debates about the actual number of children who are sexually abused each year in the U.S. continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Russell, 1986; Bass and Davis, 1988). It remained unclear if reports of sexual abuse increased during the past decade because of changing social

conditions which have made it easier to report abuse or because the actual incidence increased (Finkelhor, 1986). Unable to resolve this debate, it is important to understand the beliefs about the meanings of numbers, and the explanations and interpretations of the numbers put forth by the claimsmakers, as part of the rhetoric of social constructions. As such, statistics were important to child protectionists because they used numbers to advocate for increased funding and programming for children's services; feminists saw the numbers as evidence of men's common misuse of power. Clinicians initially used numbers to question claims within the therapeutic world that sexual abuse was rare, appearing epidemic only because of fantasies about sex and not because of any real events; clinicians later used statistics to estimate patient populations and to legitimate the need for a therapeutic/medical approach. The New Right used statistics to support the claim that the structure of the family and society was eroding.

Discussions about numbers are part of a rhetoric of rectitude about child sexual abuse (Best, 1987). According to Best, this type of rhetoric is employed in the emergent phase of a social problem as claimsmakers reveal their understanding of the issue. But the use of numbers to identify a problem was only one level of activity; a second level of rhetorical work occurred when the claims about the

numbers of sexually abused children became focused on how these children were affected by sexual abuse.

Constructing the Damaged Child: The Link to the Sentimental Child

As feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right constructed their discourses on child sexual abuse their definitions converged in one central overarching way: each argued that sexual abuse created persistent, negative effects on children's psychological development (Gelinas, 1983; Courtois, 1988; National Committee on Child Abuse Prevention, 1985; Child Protection Reports, 1985). Built on the cultural belief that children have value because of their emotional worth, the emergence of what I define as the "damaged child" was a major part of each discourse and marked a unique construction of sexual abuse in the 1970s and 1980s. Importantly, defining sexual abuse as psychologically devastating also allowed the construction of a simple message about sex between adults and children: it is <u>always</u> harmful to children. The idea of the damaged child allowed the definition of an existing social problem to be adapted by a wide audience and created a message for the media to carry about the cost to identity.

Identity has become a focal point of social concern and activity in modern society (Bellah, et al., 1984). Interest in the idea of identity and self based on personal

choice, individuality, consumption and meaning took on importance during the period before and after World War I and became even more significant following World War II (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988). According to Heinz Kohut (1977) the therapist responsible for creating "Self Psychology" - one of the most popular forms of psychological theory and practice in the United States today (Eagle, 1984) - the cultural and political disintegration produced by World War II, was mirrored in the psychological fragmentation created in individuals (Kohut, 1977:6). Some, most notably Christopher Lasch, (1979), have described the growth of a "culture of narcissism" which replaced an emphasis on self-sacrifice, delayed gratification and familial centeredness during this period. Yet, it was in these post war years, Bellah, and his co-authors point out, that the growing organization and predictability of social life created a sense of order and structure which was paralleled by a proliferating sense of personal disorganization and disintegration. Thus the increased interest in the self and the concomitant sense that the self was more fragile than ever before grew in tandem, and created an emphasis on therapeutic narratives (Bellah, et al., 1985).

Part of the concern with the idea of self is reflected in the cultural construction of standard accounts of personhood. It is now considered not just a poetic

aphorism that "the child is father to the man(sic)," but rather a statement of certainty: childhood experiences produce adult identities (Erikson, 1959). Such teleogical beliefs have led to a perceived homogenization of identity, with various experiences have been categorized according to the personalities they produce.

Much of the recent emphasis on social problems has been cast in terms of the effect of childhood or adolescent experiences on adult identity (Schneider and Kitsuse, 1984). Additionally researchers have sought to predict personalities that might be at risk for various problems given current behavior and sense of self. Examples of "high risk youth" abound, not just in the abuse and neglect literature, but also in discussions of anorexia, bulimia, suicide, running away, drug use and homelessness. These accounts are based on ideas about the shared characteristics of abused children, their problems and their psychological development. All these analyses combine to create a sense of controlling social problems and treating their consequences, which include altering the behavior of those who abuse - so that they do not abuse again - and of the young children who are abused - so that they do not continue patterns of victimization. In these ways experts and ordinary citizens can understand how the individual actors in the abuse story are constituted, where the boundaries between self and other are maintained

or violated, and how social institutions create, sustain, or violate these boundaries. Through these annalyses the text about sexual abuse is made readable.

The focus on identity, coupled with the split of reproduction and sexuality and the belief that sexuality is central to the self, has created an emphasis on the impact of sexual abuse on personality. All of the claimsmakers posit damage done to the child as devastating. As discussed in the previous chapter this message has also been carried consistently by the media. For example, a report on the McMartin day care case carried on an ABC news broadcast ended with the reporter commenting that the abused children would be "damaged for life and never recover from the traumatic affects of sexual abuse" (Groth, 1985). Similarly, Ward, writing from a popular, non-academic feminist perspective has labeled "the crippling effects of...childhood rape experience" (Ward, 1985:140). And Diana Russell (1986:11/12) writing on incest stated:

> Incestuous abuse is an important social problem because of the intense suffering and sanctions and long term effects that result from it...Two of our survey findings - that incestuous abuse is so much more widespread than heretofore thought possible and that there is a strong relationship between experiences of such abuse in childhood and adolescence and later experiences of victimization - suggest that millions of American girls are being socialized into victim roles. Other research suggests a connection between incest victimization and drug abuse, prostitution, suicide, mental illness, self-mutilation, alcoholism, running away from home...and later becoming a mother who is less

able to protect her daughter from incest victimization.

Many of the assertions about the devastation of sexual abuse have been linked with a loss of childhood. Because it imparts sexual knowledge, sexual abuse is thought to constitute a loss of innocence and therefore to break down one of the most significant boundaries between adults and children (Jackson, 1982). The loss of childhood is, of course, a metaphorical one, and is a loss of the sentimental childhood of contemporary constructions (Zelizer, 1985). Sexually abused children are not given the status or power of adults because of their experience. Being neither adults, nor "true" children, sexually victimized children are given a new status - that of victim or survivor of abuse - on which to build an identity.

The identities created by claimsmakers for sexually abused children were not uniform. Sometimes even when the same terms were used, a different phenomenon was being described. Feminists and clinicians have both championed the term "survivors" while child protectionists and the New Right discussed "victims." Part of the difference in the labels was due to the fact that feminists and clinicians usually write, speak about or treat adults who were abused as children. They are literally dealing with survivors of a past experience. Child protectionists and the New Right have focused almost exclusively on children who were still in abusive situations. The difference between the choice

of the term "survivor" or "victim," however, is complex. When examined closely, the word choice reveals levels of claimsmaking activities about how the self is constructed, how sexuality is defined, and how the family is viewed.

Constructing the Survivor: How Child Sexual Abuse Shapes Identity

Writing the introduction to her work The Courage to Heal, Ellen Bass (1988:13) noted:

> I first heard that children were abused in 1974...there were no groups for survivors of child sexual abuse then. The word "survivor" was not yet in our vocabulary...

The word survivor had initially been used earlier in the 1970s by a group of feminist activists in Washington, D.C. who labeled themselves "survivors of rape" (Aegis, Winter, 1979). Defining rape as a profound victimization, the women sought a means by which they could express a more powerful relationship to their violation without erasing the fact of the event from their lives. Feminists sought to come to grips with a dialectic between speech and silence (Lorde, 1978). They neither wished to be silenced about rape, nor did they wish to label themselves solely as victims. In searching for a way to speak about their assaults, and to give voice to their terror, the women came to see themselves as bearing witness against the patriarchal culture which fostered male domination over women, thereby sanctioning rape (Russell, 1980). The

application of the term "survivor" to identify the experiences of women who had been sexually abused as children was an easy transition. Since the same paradigm was used to understand rape and sexual abuse, the term "survivor" was simply transferred from one event to another. In this linguistic choice, however, feminists made a commitment to adults whose abuse occurred in the past. The experiences of children currently being abused was not captured either in the term "survivor" or in the adult-centered feminist politics that emerged around sexual victimization, and produced a national network of incest survivor groups.

During the 1980s many organizations for incest survivors started around the country. One of the most reported-on groups is "Incest Survivors Anonymous," (I.S.A.) a twelve step self-help program, like Alcoholics Anonymous, dedicated to helping women recover from sexual abuse (Bass and Davis, 1988). According to I.S.A. a victim is a person who is abused and who may assume a victim role, being continuously revictimized from childhood through adulthood. A survivor is a victim of incest who is taking steps to recover (Incest Survivors Anonymous, 1987). A broad array of abusive experiences is addressed by I.S.A. because their definition of incest is not limited to violations by relatives. I.S.A.'s idea of incest is more inclusive and covers everyone a child might be entrusted to

or might trust. This includes friends, family and anyone with institutional power such as: ministers, military personnel, police, executives, lawyers, or therapists.

A second national organization, VOICES (Victims of Incest Can Emerge Survivors) in Action started in 1980. VOICES in Action gives referrals for therapists and other social services. It also provides members with a "survival kit" which includes resource material and a subscription to the organization's newsletter. Like many organizations, VOICES in Action provides specialized services, in their case for "multiple personalities, those abused by priests and those who experienced sadistic abuse" (Bass and Davis, 1988).

The word "survivor" in organization titles and for individual identities has a powerful effect. Not only does it give a more assertive attribution to the person who has experienced rape, or abuse, it also places the idea of sexual assault and the personhood of those involved into particular historical contexts and sociological categories. Importantly, the construction of the "damaged child" partially relied on the association of child sexual abuse with other tragic or devastating events. Using the term "survivor," claimsmakers entered the narratives of child sexual abuse into a broader 20th century discourse about destruction and endurance.

The Survivor as a Twentieth Century Discourse

Historically, those who are considered survivors have lived through a particular event or series of events which threaten their lives. Events such as the Nazi holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima, or experiences such as imprisonment during war, living more than five years with cancer, or seven years with AIDS, are ones which have warranted the appellation of "survivor." Each of these events may seem unsurvivable because they are physically difficult to endure. Therefore, the first meaning of "survival" is a literal one; it simply means to continue functioning until the conditions which challenged a person's existence are removed. But surviving is not merely a biological phenomenon.

As an idea and an identity, "survival" includes several dimensions. First, it requires consideration of what makes survival possible. Is there a special quality which allows some to survive while, in some circumstances, most perish? What must a person do to survive? Are there unusual conditions, characteristics and attitudes which engender survival? And having once survived, what responsibilities rest with the survivor? Must one bear witness, repress memories, or numb emotions? Is there a moral imperative to survival? Given these questions about the survivor identity, it is necessary to explore the historical significance which lies in the feminist choice

of the term "survivor" for those who have been sexually victimized. More than a simple word choice, this is a political stance and a claim about the horror and damage of sexual abuse.

The prototypical survivor of the 20th century is one who has survived the Nazi holocaust in a concentration camp. Survival in this context has been explored by a vast number of scholars including theologians (Ostow, 1982), historians (Wang, 1984), psychiatrists (Krystal, 1984) and sociologists (Horkheimer, 1947; Adorno, 1973). Although each writer has sought to answer a complex set of questions about human nature, aggression, community and the bureaucratization of genocide, at its heart every inquiry has confronted a common concern: how is it possible to survive a situation where all the trappings of civilization have been ripped away and where humans have committed the grossest atrocities against other humans? What impact does the past have on the physical, mental and social adaptation of those who survive? The larger philosophical question which informs these writings is: how can meaning be created out of seemingly meaningless and random events? These questions have been asked about the adult and child survivors of the camps and have generated two literatures on survivors that apply to child sexual abuse.

Survivors of Nazi concentration camps ranged in age from the very young to the very old, and subsequently the sequelae for individuals differed according to whether the prisoner was old enough to have an established identity and life which was being disrupted or if s/he was a child with a forming and easily fragmented ego structure (Krystal, 1984). The literature on adult survivors, which includes the work of Bruno Bettelheim (1979), Victor Frankl (1975), Robert Jay Lifton (1979), Henry Krystal (1984) and Klaus Hoppe (1984), among others, describes the devastation of having all previous life structures removed and norms changed. Humiliation, torture, starvation and loss pervaded the lives of concentration camp inmates. To survive these conditions, people employed a variety of devices. Chronicled and categorized by Joel Dimsdale these strategies included:

> differential focus on the good; survival for a purpose; psychological removal; emotional or environmental mastery; will to live; active or passive hope; group affiliation; regression; fatalism; and surrender" (Dimsdale, 1980).

In an environment which restricted all other choices and means of control, prisoners had the ability to construct an attitude towards their experience and to behave in accordance with this attitude.

Many of the writings which emerged from the holocaust, like the personal narratives which emerged about sexual abuse, gained their power because of the attitudes of

strength and hope they expressed. But physical survival, which Bruno Bettelheim (1979) points out could only be ensured by the activity of a liberating army and not by the inmates themselves, is only one form of survival. It is the middle step of a triad which includes imprisonment and aftermath. The facts of imprisonment in concentration camps have been well documented both in books and in films such as "Shoah." Those of the aftermath have generated much interest and dispute. Part of the debate about the impact of concentration camp life has focused on whether or not the effects were universal and led to a "survivor syndrome" or if the effect rested on previous levels of psychological functioning and adaptations. Klaus Hoppe (1984), who conducted a thorough review of the holocaust literature, reported that there were eight common psychic aftermaths of Nazi persecution in concentration camps. The eight aftermaths were:

> anxiety, combined with phobic and hypochondriacal fears, nightmares and insomnia; disturbances of cognition and memory; chronic reactive depression accompanied by survivor guilt, psychic numbness and regression; psychotic like manifestations; a persistent sense of heightened vulnerability; disturbances in the sense of identity, of body image and of self image; permanent personality changes; and psychosomatic symptoms and disorders (Hoppe, 1984).

The creation of a survivor syndrome, which has alternately been designated as "concentration camp syndrome," "chronic stress syndrome," or "psycho-traumatic stress syndrome," was an attempt to label and contain the

aftermath of an extreme life event. Need for a label came from a variety of sources. The German government sought a means by which some holocaust victims would be compensated for the crimes committed against them. A retribution process required a standard means for identifying the impact of the camps on individuals. By constructing a syndrome, individual cases could be measured against a norm. (In actuality the issue of retribution was complex and clouded. Many who had suffered enormous losses and horrible brutality were judged to have pre-existing conditions and not the survivor syndrome. These people were denied any remuneration for what they had suffered (Dimsdale, 1980).

An additional group who felt a need to identify patterns in survivors was the psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers who began to see this population in their therapeutic practices. Holocaust survivors presented therapists with a unique set of issues, ones that would be mirrored by many incest victims a generation later. Here was a group of people who were suffering the effects of massive psychic trauma inflicted by hostile forces. Their pain came not from fantasies about aggression, but from real, overwhelming, environmental circumstances. Having been trained, for the most part, to understand the role fantasy plays in sexual and aggressive impulses, the psychotherapeutic community needed a tool for analyzing the

effects of the all-too-real holocaust (Gyomroi, 1963). As a conceptual paradigm, the survivor syndrome offered therapists a mechanism for framing the consequences and treating the survivors. Not all therapists eagerly embraced the idea of a syndrome. According to Jack Terry (1984) the designation of a survivor syndrome is an unconscious form of exploitation because it denies the individual his/her own experience through the process of generalization. Terry was also deeply concerned with the tabula rasa nature of the arguments put forth by syndrome advocates. In effect, they argued that the pre-trauma personality of the survivor had no impact on how the camps were experienced. Countering this notion Terry writes: "An external experience cannot be independent of one's personal history if it is to have effect" (Terry, 1984: 485).

Even those who have argued against a generalizable syndrome affecting every survivor agree that those who emerged from the camps did so after experiencing a rare kind of trauma. As such, this population offers psychological theorists an opportunity to examine the psychic consequences of severed attachments, loss, vulnerability, inability to mourn and resiliency in a specific context. From this context, theory and research about other events and different populations have been amassed including work on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Lifton,

1979), the Korean and Vietnam wars, disasters such as the Buffalo Creek flood and the potential disasters of nuclear winter. In focusing attention on how external events cause internal disintegration, this literature has provided a rich source of understanding of the impact of trauma on the self and mechanisms of self preservation. A clearly related, but different literature has appeared on the child survivors of the holocaust.

According to Robert Krell, who has been documenting the life events and responses of this group, a child survivor, is:

> any Jewish child who survived in Nazi-occupied Europe by whatever means whether in hiding, or as a fighter in the camps. To be considered a child the survivor should have been no older than 16 at the end of the war (Krell, 1985).

Like the adult prisoners, children were exposed to a world that was organized around brutality and unrelenting terror. These children suffered the deprivation of a stable environment, a constant caretaker and a predictable routine. Research conducted both prior to and after World War II has focused on the necessity of these elements for child development (Bowlby, 1969). Classic psychoanalytic literature shows concern with the impact of a single event which would deprive a child of nurturant care (Freud, 1951). Young concentration camp survivors raised a number of challenges in the application of such theories since they represented a group which had been denied the needed

components for attachment and had suffered a multitude of traumas. Paralleling the questions child sexual abuse researchers would later focus on, holocaust experts wondered how these children could function psychologically after such massive assaults and what specific mechanisms had allowed them to survive. Answers to these questions can be found in writings done about the children in the years immediately following liberation. A second source of information is interviews with these children, now grown and able to gauge and articulate the impact of the holocaust on their subsequent development.

Young children, studied soon after their imprisonment ended, reported having survived the holocaust through a combination of behavioral and psychological adaptations, assertiveness, emotional numbness and self-reliance (Moskovitz, 1985). The children also stated that they compartmentalized the trauma so as to deal with it incrementally (Krell, 1985). In their post-War experiences child survivors felt "stigmatized, damaged and different" (Moskovitz, 1985:402). Their greatest desire was to be considered normal.

Adults who were in camps as children state that they currently have problems with: insomnia, insecurity, depression, loneliness, chronic anxiety, desperation, chronic pain and psychic disorganization (Krystal, 1984; Chodoff, 1980; Moskovitz, 1985). A psychiatric evaluation

of these adults reveals an assessment none made of themselves: they "all possess a considerable intellect in addition to a set of intuitive skills which are often staggering" (Krell, 1985:399). While the legacy of the holocaust varied for individuals, it has uniformly been identified as the most significant, formative life event for adults who spent their childhoods imprisoned in concentration camps (Krell, 1985).

The holocaust provided a two-fold legacy for claimsmakers who constructed child sexual abuse as a social problem. First, it showed that children could survive horrible social environments and remain psychologically intact (Moskovitz, 1985). I believe that awareness of this fact--that adults mistreat children and children survive--provided a context in which clinicians could stake a claim about sexual abuse and find legitimation. Secondly, the creation of the survivor syndrome provided a framework for identity and a vocabulary that initially feminists, and later clinicians would use to describe the experience of sexually exploited children.

Using the "survivor" designation clearly places child sexual abuse within the confines of some of the most traumatic events in human experience. This construction is found in an article published in the New York Times in 1987 entitled, "Terror's Children: Mending Mental Wounds" which reported that:

> ...the psychological scars of terror and turbulence in childhood can impair emotional and intellectual growth. Symptoms, often disguised, can emerge years later. The research has also found that children terrorized in radically different ways - from wartime atrocities to family violence - share certain remarkably similar symptoms of lasting emotional pain. The new evidence that trauma, even a single brush with it, can lead to serious long lasting problems has led to a plan to extend the psychiatric diagnosis of "post traumatic stress disorder" to children (Coleman, 2/24/87:15).

Evidence that the survivor identity has become adapted by a large number of claimsmakers can be found in conference announcements, magazine articles, television shows, professional literature and newsletters. In 1988, for example, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect and the Children's Hospital National Medical Center co-hosted a conference called the "National Symposium on Child Victimization." Every workshop on adults who were sexually abused as children used the word "survivor" in the title (Children's Hospital Division of Child Protection, 1988). In the television film "Something About Amelia" a social worker tells the mother that Amelia must get treatment so "she can stop being a victim and become the survivor that she can be."

The widespread usage of "survivor" is notable for several reasons. Most feminist claims about sexual abuse were not so widely adapted. The term "rape" for example, which was the basis of the survivor identity, was not assumed by other claimsmakers and remained part of the

feminist paradigm for labeling child sexual abuse. Additionally, the fact that sexual abuse was considered analogous to tragedies meant that the claims and constructions were made on the basis of the worst cases of sexual victimization. Even though there is a continuum of behavior considered sexual abuse (Russell, 1986) including anything from exhibitionism to penetration, the general use of the term "survivor" erased the different types of abuse and varying responses of children. This homogenization of experience and identity made sexual abuse appear as a single problem, with one outcome - trauma.

Perhaps more importantly, the focus on the damaged child meant that the only culturally appropriate response to children's sexual victimization had to be negative. Any ambivalence about sex between adults and children or children as sexual beings was erased. The contention that any pleasure could be experienced by children in this situation was disowned by all the claimsmakers (Data Center, 1981; Berliner, 1985). Ironically, the insistence on the inherently destructive aspects of sexual abuse insured that the problem be taken seriously for the psychological harm it did, but that nothing structural be done about it. A psychological problem requires a clinical, therapeutic/medical solution. Thus, a feminist claim about sexual abuse was adapted, without the feminist politics or solution to empower children and change the

gender and generational inequality within families (Gordon, 1988). The "epidemic" numbers of sexually abused children were used to expand the boundaries of medical (i.e., clinical) claims and legitimate the need for more professional and psychological services. As Lucy Berliner (National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1985) noted:

> Sociologists and family violence scholars might provide the numbers, but we (social workers) put the meat on the bones - its <u>our</u> problem because we <u>treat</u> the victims.

Feminists, social workers, psychologists and other clinicians claims about the damaged child combined with the New Right's and protectionists' emphasis on children's victimization to produce a concern with eradicating sexual abuse and led to the creation of prevention programs across the country.

Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs: Claims About Touch and Self Concept

In the modern construction of sexual abuse, prevention programs began to appear in 1978 and became the main industry associated with the problem (Illusion Theatre, 1985). Organized initially by child protectionists and feminists, prevention programs took as their focus the delineation of appropriate and inappropriate touch, the rights of children to say "no" so as to control their bodies and the issue of secrecy (Colao and Hosansky, 1985).

An additional task that prevention programs assumed was defining for children the constitutive elements of sexual abuse and teaching parents how to recognize if their children had been abused (Adams and Fay, 1981; Freeman, 1984). As guides for defining, talking and hearing about abuse, prevention material acts as a cultural primer about child and adult social relations and gives a clear delineation of the discourses.

Prevention programs sound common themes, whether it be in live presentations, theatre productions or written material. The commonality is not the result of serendipity. It is the outcome of careful planning, design and analyses of what constitutes a "good" prevention program. Writing in the premier volume of "Preventing Sexual Abuse" Carol Plummer, a noted prevention expert, provided a checklist of elements which constitute a successful prevention program. These included: recognition of the "atrocity" of child sexual abuse; inclusion of legal, medical, social service and educational professionals; interaction with media coverage; and adaptation of "films," coloring books, curricula, plays, etc., to help adults tell children about sexual abuse (Plummer, 1986:1-3).

The central themes of prevention programs are the type of touch that constitutes abuse and the right of children to have physical and emotional boundaries with adults.

Attempting to define sexual abuse and distinguish between non-abusive and abusive touch, as discussed in Chapter One, prevention programs produced a series of dichotomous distinctions between "good" and "bad" touch. "Red Light People, Green Light People;" "Feeling Yes;" "Feeling No;" were among the dualisms created for children (Perennial Education, Inc., N.D.). Adults were taught to help their children differentiate between "appropriate and inappropriate touch" (Colao and Hosansky, 1985).

While all claimsmakers aided in the construction of these categories, the language used to differentiate types of touches varied. Describing the New Rights position on the topic, the American Christian Voice Foundation (1985:6) published the following advice to parents:

> Every human is the keeper of their body. We have a right to say who and how others may touch or look at our body. "Good touches" (those which are morally acceptable) make me feel good, safe and loved. Examples of "good touches" for a child might include a good night kiss or a warm hug, being gently tickled or bounced on mommy's knee, holding hands or riding piggyback with daddy. "Bad touches" (those which are morally unacceptable) leave an uncomfortable feeling, not the feelings of love, respect and safety that "good touches" bring. "Bad touches" might include a pinch, a hard slap or a touch in a private area. Any place normally covered by a swimsuit is off limits for touching...

The New Right's means of assuring that immoral touch was prevented came through the creation of various child-find or protection kits. As documented previously, child protection kits generally included: a picture of a child;

fingerprints; footprints; a lock of hair; and dental x-rays (Child Protection Alert, 1985). None of these products insured that children would be safe and in fact they could only be useful after a child was sexually abused and missing - a rare combination. The various kits were more important in that they created an appearance of action and they maintained the power between adults and children. In this strategy parents were still charged with ensuring children's safety.

By contrast feminists' prevention programs, which invariably included physical and emotional training, did not use a language of morality. Instead, discussions among feminists centered on children's rights and used a language of power. Feminist prevention programs were created on the notion of equality, skills and empowerment. As the founder of a feminist prevention program explained:

> We learned a lot from the rape crisis movement in the early '70s. We learned how to fight back and how to say no. When we (the members of a collective organized against rape) discovered how many of our members had been sexually abused as children we began to think about our children and the community's children, about how to make them safe. We thought we could teach them the skills we had learned...

In order to teach children how to protect themselves, many feminist programs taught children self-defense. Consisting of verbal and physical skills, self-defense classes were one of the solutions feminists had used to teach women how to prevent rape. Since sexual abuse of

children was conceptualized through the same paradigm, it made sense to utilize the same solutions. Adapting some of the strategies was not easy, as Tamara Hosansky and Flora Colao (1985:4), founders of the first self-defense classes for children in New York City, explained:

> Imparting information in a way that children could grasp and use meant learning how to view the world from a child's perspective. In addition, we had to challenge not only the traditional ways in which children are taught about personal safety, but society's view of childhood and childrearing as well. We had to set aside our preconceived ideas and open ourselves to learning from children.

All of the prevention programs I gathered information about included a clinical discourse, either as a subtext or a main point, about building self-esteem and feelings of self-worth in children. Positing a direct link between feelings about the self and victimization, this narrative exhorted parents to teach children their value so they would be less vulnerable to sexual abuse. Linda Sanford (1980:13) noted:

> Child sexual abusers manipulate the self-concept of the child victim. The offender will choose a child who seems insecure and will hold out the promise of eternal love and friendship if the child will only cooperate with him. How solidly the child likes herself will determine her vulnerability to the offender's promises.

Claims About Adult Authority and Children's Power

According to prevention program rhetoric, children's self-esteem and their right to control their bodies rest on

the right to say no to adults. To refuse adult authority is a radical idea if pursued to the conclusion that children need never obey adults, particularly parents. Through sexual abuse prevention programs children are taught to say no when they feel "uncomfortable" with adults' orders. To maintain adult authority, the right to say no is not presented as a universal one and this is one reason why incest is talked about in prevention programs, but rarely used as examples of when a child should disobey. One prevention specialist who had been working in the field for seven years thought about this problem and noted:

> You want to communicate to the kids that they shouldn't listen to adults who tell them to get in cars with them or who want to put their hands down their pants. But, you still want them to take out the garbage when they're told to. You have to be careful to not undermine parents' power in the eyes of their kids. It's tricky.

Trying to maintain parents' authority and educate children is only one aspect of prevention programs and of power issues between parents and children. Programs also aim to teach children not to keep secrets. As noted above, secrets are designated as bad information and are differentiated from surprises which are good pieces of information, withheld until they can be revealed at the appropriate time. Because secrets are a way in which sexual abusers get children to collude in maintaining silence, thereby perpetuating abuse, prevention programs have seized on secrets as an important concept (Sanford,

1980; Gordon and Gordon, 1984; Wachter, 1984). Children are charged with breaking the secret of sexual assault and ending their abuse by enlisting a helpful adult - a teacher, a nurse, a parent (Pall and Streit, 1983).

Not addressed in prevention programs is the potential power that children can gain over adults if they maintain the secret. In cases of incest, children have the power to disrupt family relations and cause a rearrangement of existing family structures (Herman, 1981). This issue is dealt with in some treatment literature - cast as an exaggerated sense of power and responsibility on the part of the victim - but is not examined in terms of what this type of power means in actuality for adult/child relationships.

A second issue that tends to be ignored by some claimsmakers, but is addressed by clinicians and the New Right, is children's false assertions of sexual assault - a breaking of silence of a different type. As witnessed by the McMartin day care and Jordan Minnesota cases, children can wield power over adults by accusing them of sexual abuse (Crewdson, 1988). This power has been noted by others, particularly the mass media, and relies on a social climate where children are believed when they talk about sexual abuse ("60 Minutes," February, 1988; Crewdson, 1988). Accusations of child sexual abuse have become part of some divorce cases where they are debated within

custody disputes. Originally interpreted as an issue of whether children as a group lie or do not lie about sexual abuse (Kempe and Kempe, 1984), the broader social issues were overlooked: children had a new chip in their power relationships with adults. VOCAL (Victims of Child Abuse Legislation), the New Right group, has urged that children not be believed when they claim sexual abuse and has fought to get power back firmly in the hands of adults (Lansing State Journal, February 17, 1985; Crewdson, 1988). Other claimsmakers have largely kept silent on the issue, focusing instead on how to interpret and react to signs of sexual abuse.

A Model Prevention Program

In order to sort out some of the complexities of Prevention Programs I did a year-long field study of a small demonstration project that had been funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. Beginning in the Fall of 1985, through the Fall of 1986 I observed the creation of this program, its implementation and its demise. Because the Prevention Program was not based in a school, or an accessible agency, it had to be structured so that it could be presented at public forums. The Project's administrators decided on two settings - shopping malls and libraries. These public areas were excellent settings in which to observe how parents and children were taught about

appropriate and inappropriate touch; the right of children to say no to adults; and the secrecy of sexual assault.

Three target groups were identified by the Project's staff - two social workers and a psychologist as in need of education about child sexual abuse: key community leaders - including ministers, politicians, teachers and boy scout and girl scout leaders; service providers - people already working with children and families; and parents. Interestingly, children themselves were not a target audience. In fact, plans were made to divert children's attention from the program content so that they could be occupied while their parents learned.

In ten shopping malls and libraries throughout Michigan the Prevention Program was given separate space so that a didactic session on sexual abuse could be held. Literature displays were created for each setting and always included: pamphlets that listed the myths and facts of sexual abuse; an information sheet on missing children and one on runaways; academic and popular books on sexual abuse such as Russell's The Secret Trauma, Finkelhor's Child Sexual Abuse, Rush's The Best Kept Secret; and coloring and storybooks on sexual abuse. A videotape- "Touch" - produced by Illusion Theatre on the topic of sexual abuse prevention was shown repetitively. Each person who attended a session or who stopped in the malls or libraries to talk was given a packet of material

comprised of information about sexual abuse, with tips on prevention. Book stores in each mall prominently displayed their sexual abuse offerings during the program and libraries featured their collections.

Children were entertained by a large duck while their parents gathered information. The duck - named Quacky- was the Project's mascot. Standing six to seven feet tall, "Quacky" tended to frighten children under five, while those over five approached without trepidation. Balloons were given to each child and in each mall children could register to win a prize when they approached the display. On average two hundred adults were given packets of information in each setting.

Discussing Sexual Abuse in Public Settings

Every person who attended a session on sexual abuse was taught about the damage done to abused children and were given information about how to prevent abuse. Although incest was mentioned, the focus of the information was on assaults by strangers or authority figures such as police officers or neighbors. The avoidance of father-daughter incest - prominently visible in the books on display - was particularly apparent. Both the professionals working at the display - all with social work or psychology backgrounds - and those approaching for information distanced themselves from the topic. Across

the state these types of questions were asked and statements made:

* Me and my friends are Christians and we are very much interested in sexual abuse prevention in the community. How do you get communities to pay attention to all these old guys who are molesting our children?
* I'm worried about missing children. I want to get one of these kits I've heard about on T.V. so I can fingerprint my kids before they go back to school in September.
* Don't you think that by talking about sexual abuse all the time we just give people ideas about going out and finding vulnerable children to attack?
* Lawyers are programming children to lie about sexual abuse in custody cases. It's wrong. They're tearing apart families.
* I feel so bad for these kids who have to talk about their being sexually abused. It's difficult for adults to talk about the details of intimate contact. Think of how hard it would be for a child.
* Children are being harmed by current discussions of sexual abuse. I just came by (a mall in the lower part of Michigan) to tell you that what you

people are doing is hurting children because you keep talking about things that hurt them instead of things that make them happy.

* I was abused as a child and I wish there had been programs like this one around so I would have known who to talk to and that I wasn't alone.
* Do abused children always grow up to sexually abuse other children? I hope not, this has to stop somewhere.
* Why do we give these people therapy when they should go to jail? Molesters are criminals. They need to be punished for what they have done or they'll just keep doing it.

These were representative questions that were asked and statements that were made in each of the communities. They illustrate some popular perceptions of the problem and several fundamental beliefs that the general public, at least in parts of Michigan, seem to hold about sexual abuse - that children are endangered, but talk may make the problem too visible and may become a problem in its own right; and that child molesters could be family members, but they are always talked about as distanced, others- alien from the daily lives of most people.

The failure on the part of the Prevention team to discuss incest in a more forceful or direct way intrigued me, particularly because they were willing to display books

like Finkelhor's, Russell's and Rush's. I asked the project director why he had not made incest a more central focus of the didactic program. His reply was instructive:

> We want to maximize the number of people who will participate. Even though you and I know that most sexual abuse cases occur in families that's a difficult thing to say in a shopping mall or a library. These are places a family goes together - particularly the mall. I can't get up there and say - "you're relatives are sexually abusing your children, especially your daughters," people would think I was trying to undermine their families or that I was saying things that children shouldn't hear. So I try to get across a slightly different message - children need to learn what abuse is so they can be protected. That way even if it's a family member who is doing the abusing maybe the child will learn how to talk about who is abusing them and what's being done. I also have a hidden agenda here- I'm hoping some of these adults will remember their own sexual assault experiences when they were children and disclose them to a friend or therapist. I want to see everyone who needs services get them.

During the presentations many questions were asked about how to recognize symptoms of sexual abuse and how to identify perpetrators. Consistently, the staff emphasized the idea of good and bad touch and the need to believe children who said they were sexually abused. A strong child protectionist perspective was evidenced while some knotty problems, like incest, were overlooked or diminished. An issue not addressed in this program or others of a similar type was who a child should talk to if s/he was abused by a parent. The message that is always taught in prevention programs is that if a child is being abused s/he should confide in a parent which for some

children means confiding in either the person who is the perpetrator or the spouse of that person. Complicated social relations are overlooked. Communication may not be as liberating as it is portrayed in prevention programs.

One of the experts I interviewed - a prevention specialist - who had just returned from a week-long intensive workshop on prevention - noted another problem in protectionist prevention strategies:

> Today we emphasize that children should disclose the fact that they are being sexually abused. We tell them what to say - "someone is touching me in a "private zone," or some statement like that. We teach them who to tell - a trusted adult- like a parent, teacher or the policeman at the corner. We believe that we've created a safe environment for children to discuss their assaults in, but I feel like we've created another set of problems. What happens to the child who feels unable to talk to anyone? Who has no sense that anyone is trustworthy and so won't disclose to a single person? Haven't we added another burden to this child's problems? A child who can't talk in an environment that declares itself open to such information is seen as guilty of another type of crime of silence.

Issues like the ones raised by the prevention expert make clear that child sexual abuse and its constructions are not simple problems, but are complex and must be understood from a variety of perspectives. Simple formulas, like disclosure is always good are not enough. They observe more than they reveal. Part of the complexity of child sexual abuse is that the struggles around its constructions are only one piece of a large process which is restructuring the social relationship between adults and

children. This restructuring is the focus of the next chapter.

Summary

As feminists, clinicians, child protectionists and the New Right advanced an argument about the numbers of sexually abused children, they also created an image of a damaged child, devastated by the aftermath of sexual abuse. This construction of the damaged child is one of the central claims of the modern "discovery" of sexual abuse. Sweeping in its characterization, the claim came out of feminist activities, but wrought clinical solutions, thereby individualizing the problem of sexual abuse and making it primarily a psychological phenomenon. Prevention programs were created out of the desire to eradicate the harm done to children in sexual abuse cases, thereby eliminating the damaged child. This rendering of and response to child sexual abuse fits with other currents in contemporary American society in that it avoids issues of power, inequality and social structure, in favor of an emphasis on "private troubles" (Bellah, et. al. 1984).

CHAPTER 7

RECONSTRUCTING CHILDHOOD: PUTTING CONSTRUCTIONS ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN CONTEXT

Child sexual abuse is only one of the social problems affecting children which has received widespread attention in the 1970s and 1980s. As part of social activity that has scrutinized problems like physical abuse, abduction and pornography, the social constructions about child sexual abuse are part of a wider reconstruction of the social relations of adulthood and childhood. Focusing on children's sexual victimization raises other, larger questions about the nature of childhood, of sexuality and of the family. It also brings to the forefront questions about adulthood because inevitably, a reconstructed childhood leads to a reconstituted adulthood. This chapter examines the ways in which the constructions about child sexual abuse have shaped and reflected these broader themes. In particular, it explores: the sentimental child as an historical phenomenon; the loss of childhood as a central concern within modern society; the reshaping of childhood; and the shift in adults' relationships with children. Finally, I briefly consider the strengths and

limits of social constructionism as an approach to social problems.

The Sentimental Child

As discussed previously, from 1870 to 1930 the value, and therefore the treatment of children in the United States changed (Zelinzer, 1985). During this period children from all social classes lost their economic utility. Once active participants in family and community economies, children became prized for their emotional value as opposed to their labor power. As emotional beings, children were segregated into private worlds where they were to be nurtured, loved and educated by their parents. The sacred child was an ideological construct which also included the sentimentalization of the family. Children's need for care - and the protection of their sanctity - fell to women who were defined as naturally endowed childrearers. The reification of women as mothers and of children within the family and home obscured their powerlessness in other institutions, most notably in a capitalist society, in the economy.

Concerns with emotional well-being came to dominate 20th century discourses about children. Alternately viewed as threatened by or a threat to adults, children were identified as in need of molding, or other types of social training or control. Empathy and understanding, not harsh

discipline or corporal punishment, became the foundations of modern child development theories. These theories posit that children who are cared for will grow to be psychologically healthy, economically productive adults.

Ideas about children's need for empathy and nurturance stand in stark contrast to earlier modes of childrearing. Lloyd DeMause in classifying stages in the history of childhood has noted variations in childrearing techniques that have evolved over time. According to DeMause treatment of children can be classified in the following categories and stages: 1) from earliest history to the 4th century - the Infanticidal Mode where children were sold into slavery, thrown into rivers, maimed, potted or buried in trenches; 2) from the 4th - 13th century - the Abandonment Mode where children were sent to wet nurses and/or to other households as apprentices, and frequently beaten to destroy the evil within; 3) from the 14th - 17th century - the Ambivalent Mode where children were thought to be like clay, in need of molding; 4) the 18th century- the Intrusive Mode where children were "prayed with but not played with, hit but not regularly whipped" (1974:52). Children were no longer viewed as intrinsically evil, but were socialized to feel guilt; 5) the Socialization Mode- from the 19th to the mid-20th century - where children were trained into appropriate behavior and interaction; and 6) the Helping Mode - mid-20th century to the present-

children are empathized with and nurtured so they can develop their full human potential.

Most of the modes which dominated history depicted children as evil and took actions, that today would be considered abusive, necessary for taming and breaking children's wills. Following DeMause other scholars have also turned their attention to documenting historical variations in childhood (Skolnick, 1976; Boswell, 1988). These studies reveal that far from the innocent, dependent characterization of modern times, childhood has most often been a period of abuse, abandonment and terror. DeMause himself (1974:43) argued:

> ...the sexual abuse of children was far more common in the past than today...the child in antiquity lived his earliest years in an atmosphere of sexual abuse...

Boswell (1988) in his recent history of child abandonment corroborated DeMause's analysis and accumulated massive evidence that children from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance were treated harshly, and in ways which would clearly be given the label social problem today. From these historical accounts emerge pictures of childhood as a varied experience dependent on many social forces, including the existence of social problem movements and child saving campaigns.

The emphasis on children's need to learn and to be protected created a social context in which children who were not nurtured or cared for could be seen as victimized.

Children's need for protection emerges from their perceived innocence. The evil child of past periods was replaced by the innocent child of present constructions. As ideas about innocence grew so did ones about victimization. Thorne (1987) has noted that innocence is frequently evoked as a means to "cut into structures of blaming." Thus children's innocence is used as a way to communicate that they are not responsible for certain types of experiences-particularly sexual ones. The innocent child is also an ignorant child who is endangered by knowledge. To the degree that children lack information they are identified as childlike. This emphasis on the ignorant child has given rise to the sentimentalization of the pre-television child and to a broader discourse about the loss of childhood.

The Loss of Childhood

When children are sexually abused the following type of claim is frequently made:

> Children who have been exploited and sexually abused have missed childhood. It is a source of pain, with feelings of abandonment and ambivalence towards love relationships, the psychological and economic toll is immense (U.S. Department of Justice, March, 1986:8).

As discussed above, part of the perceived loss of a childhood is a loss of innocence. Lack of sexual knowledge is one of the socially defined characteristics which make children innocent (DeMause, 1974). A second loss is the

loss of trust children experience when adults abuse them. Finkelhor and Browne (1985) creating a traumagenic theory of sexual abuse have discussed the emotions children feel when they are betrayed by adults. Children, particularly if they are abused by a parent, lose the ability to unquestioningly trust adults. This is identified as part of the process of losing the status of child, which includes a reliance on adult authority and protection. Childhood, however, is not a universal entity. Experiences of children vary across place and time and are as much a product of social constructs as social problems are (Aries, 1962; Pfhol, 1977). What is lost is a particular construction of childhood.

Ideas about the loss of childhood in the 1980s have not been limited to the discourses about sexual abuse. In fact, a growing body of literature has examined a cultural loss of childhood (Winn, 1983; Postman, 1982; Elkind, 1981). In these accounts, the loss of childhood occurs because of the amount of knowledge children have acquired about sex, bodies, violence, money, death and/or deception (Winn, 1983). Knowledge replaces innocence, as children and adults come to inhabit the same "informational worlds." There is no longer a backstage world of adulthood from which children are protected (Meyerowitz, 1985). Shared knowledge with adults, in these analyses, robs children of childhood.

Sexually abused, missing and battered children take on symbolic importance in narratives about lost childhoods. The negative consequences of sexual abuse serve as evidence for the damaging effects of entering an adult world and not experiencing a culturally normal childhood, which includes a particular psychological state and social status (Jackson, 1982). Thus, specific analyses of sexually victimized children become generalized and are used as metaphors for all children.

Concerns about the loss of childhood have not only centered on the impact on children, but have extended to other age groups. During the 1980s a number of social problems affecting adolescents and adults have been brought to public attention. Problems such as teenage pregnancy, (often dubbed "children having children") suicide and eating disorders are frequently attributed to child sexual abuse, which has robbed individuals of the "right to innocence." The etiology of many problems is traced to early, traumatic experiences, especially sexual victimization. Writing on multiple personality disorders Jean Goodwin (1985:2), an expert on incest noted:

> Recent research is identifying a growing number of factors linking the syndrome of multiple personality disorder to child abuse. Putnam, et. al., in a survey of 100 multiple personality patients...found that more than 90% of those studied had been abused during their early years.

McCormack, Janus and Burgess (1986:388) writing on runaways described the link between sexual abuse and runaway behavior:

> Compared to the general population, much higher rates of childhood sexual abuse are noted in studies of specific populations, including runaways. An estimated 9-12% of American youth between the ages of 12-17 runaway from home at least once and running away as a sequelae to sexual abuse is now recognized as a growing social problem.

Seeking explanations for culturally disturbing behavior of adolescents and adults in childhood problems is not new. Neither is the concern with the tarnishing affects of children's accumulation of knowledge. Both trends can be traced to the 1860s and the beginning of entertainment within children's culture (West, 1988).

As claims about children's inherent innocence became legitimized the need to teach children innocence disappeared. The moral sermons which had been so prevalent within children's culture before 1860 were replaced by half-dime novels with western or detective themes (MacLeod, 1975). Almost as soon as they were published these books were attacked by Anthony Comstock and other conservative, religious representatives who viewed them as criminal. Part of the concern of the conservative forces was that children were being exposed to sexuality, "the root cause of criminal, antisocial behavior" (West, 1988:16). Over the next one hundred and thirty years debates about children's exposure to aspects of culture-

both child and adult-raged. Whether the medium was books, comics, radio or television the contentions centered on the same question: could children's emotional harmony and growth be helped or hindered by elements of popular culture? Although simple in its phrasing, it is the legacy of this type of debate which is now found in discussions of the sexually-abused child.

What is a Real Child?

In The Safe Child Book: A Common Sense Approach to Protecting Your Children from Abduction and Sexual Abuse, Sherryl Kraizer, one of many self-help books for parents published on this topic, listed the following signs as evidence a parent should look for to know whether a child has been abused and thus, no longer childlike:

> Inappropriate displays of affection or explicit sexual acts; sudden use of sexual terms or new names for body parts; uncomfortableness or rejection of typical family affection; depression and withdrawal; a sudden change in personality (Kraizer, 1985:112).

According to this point of view, most often found in protectionist literature, any sexual knowledge or act on the part of a child is a potential indicator of abuse. In these writings, adults own sexuality and the right to sexual behaviors. Children's sexuality is identified only in the context of a problematic condition, resting with strangers who both abduct and abuse children, thereby making children vulnerable.

Kraizer, and other sexual abuse experts, raise an additional question about whether or not sexually abused children need therapy - thereby bringing the clinical solution to bear when prevention plans fail and using the clinical framing of the problem to legitimate programs. She writes:

> Parents often consider therapy unnecessary for child sexual abuse victims, particularly boys. Parents say things to me like "Let's let him forget it. He doesn't seem upset to me." Everything we know about child sexual abuse tells us that its effects are long lasting and devastating (Kraizer, 1985:115).

Kraizer's treatment (and prevention) strategies, like that of all of the claimsmakers, focuses, on the damage done to the child's developing sense of self (Wachter, 1984; Pall and Streit, 1983). This self is innocent and dependent on adults for protection, treatment and interpretation of experience.

Attempts to identify and then treat children believed to have been sexually abused, have frequently centered on how they touch or play with anatomically correct dolls (Berliner, 1985). Assuming that sexually abused children play with the genitals of the dolls and/or engage them in sexual activity in ways that non-sexually abused children would not play, the dolls were meant to confirm the existence of abuse. These dolls have been at the center of many treatment programs and have been used in court proceedings to identify cases of sexual abuse (Lansing

State Journal, July, 17, 1985). The idea that abused children would have the dolls engage in sexual activity was based simply on the assumption of adults that sexually abused children did not play like "normal" children. This is a significant claim because play is considered a central mode of communication for children (Basch, 1984).

Prior to 1986 no comparative studies of known sexually abused children and non-sexually abused children had been done to see, if in fact, the two groups did play differently. To remedy this situation the federal government issued a request for proposals to elicit studies on how non-sexually abused children play with anatomically correct dolls (Department of Health and Human Services, March, 1986). These studies discovered that non-sexually abused children also engaged the dolls in sexual play, and while there were variations in play across populations, they did not correlate with experiences of sexual abuse. Most significant about the dolls is what they revealed about adult expectations that sexually abused children are different. One clinician who had worked with sexually abused children and frequently appeared in court to report on findings, often used anatomically correct dolls as an indicator of abuse. She described her feelings about the use of dolls:

> Anatomically correct dolls and even games are basically good ideas. But, I think they've been overdone. There's too much focus on how the kids play with dolls and we don't know enough to

> interpret nuances in play yet. We should just let the kids use the dolls as a medium to discuss the abuse. Instead, anatomically correct dolls, which cost about $60 a piece, have become an industry. It's no longer clear who is being helped here... And who is to say that sexual play is, of necessity pathological? Why wouldn't it in some ways be healthy?

If it has been difficult to separate non-abused from abused children - to tell what the fundamental differences are- it is perhaps because at the core of this issue rests another, deeply nested issue: in a culture where children have information about sex what separates children from adults?

Redefining Adult/Child Relationships

Efforts to prevent and treat child sexual abuse raise a number of tensions in adult/child relationships. Because these programs deal with issues about sex they serve as processes of socialization into sexuality. This socialization varies among constructionists - from the New Right's sense of sex as morally dangerous to the feminist sense of sex as violence - but each construction nevertheless includes instruction about what children should know about sex. As such, attention to sexual abuse has served as a mass means of sex education - teaching children about body parts and sexual acts. Thus, the focus on sexual abuse, from all the claimsmakers, has, ironically, served as a way to give children access to sexuality. In the attempt to protect children from sexual

abuse so that they do not lose their childhoods the claimsmakers provide knowledge about sexuality, a knowledge which had previously been limited to adults. Sexual knowledge, which marked sexually abused children, and made them non-children has become part of normal childhood. The boundary between adults and children is redrawn, with some ideas about sex given more freely to children.

This socialization into sexuality, done within discourses on danger, but not ones about pleasure, allows cultural ambivalence about children and sex to be expressed, while at the same time sanctioning children's knowledge about sexuality. Because sexual knowledge is imparted as a part of socialization, the process of teaching about sexual abuse has a measure of safety, since socialization is the category through which children's experiences are most easily and eagerly understood (Thorne, 1986). Through sexual abuse prevention programs, educational institutions and families find a way to incorporate knowledge of sexuality into childhood under the guise of protecting children's innocence. The very knowledge that defined a loss of childhood becomes a strategy for protecting innocence. A shift occurs in the definition of innocence which now is understood more as a physical state - a child who is not abused is innocent; a child who is abused is damaged - than an intellectual one.

Changing perceptions of children and sexuality cause disruptions in social relations. Mary Calderone (1984:133-4), an expert on the issues of pediatrics and public health has written:

> Just as acceptance of Galileo's facts required a revision of everyone's perception of the solar system, so now the acceptance of the validity of the sexuality of infants and young children requires us to conceive of and to perceive them with a vision entirely new. This constitutes a paradigm shift of the first importance.

The paradigm shift which Calderone discusses is not limited to children, but also affects adults. If children and adults are not ideologically separated by sexuality in the ways in which they have been for the past two hundred years, how are boundaries between the two maintained? A more basic question and one that emanates from these concerns is: Why are there boundaries between adults and children?

Boundaries between adults and children are clearly needed to protect infants and to care for them at a point when they could not care for or protect themselves. As children get older, however, and particularly as they become capable of more abstract and sophisticated thought, the need for care and protection is much more variable. Recently social critics have begun to question the ways in which children are protected or kept out of productive work (Boocock, 1976). With the growing economic problems which have particularly affected women and children, the idea of

the economically useless child may have outgrown its utility (Zelizer, 1985). Ironically, with the increasing number of working poor and homeless, adults may find themselves dependent on children's contributions to family economies in order to survive.

The reconstruction of adulthood and childhood is also being contested in other arenas. One area where there are some powerful parallels is in the constructions around reproductive technologies. Surrogacy, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization and other advances in reproductive technology have fundamentally altered how connections between parents and children are thought about. Genetic relations are no longer simply natural, or clearly delineated. Fatherhood and motherhood are actively being reshaped. According to Barbara Katz Rothman (1989:18-19) a sociologist and leading analyst of reproduction, these changes have effected social relations:

> More and more of us are choosing to live our lives this way, putting together families by choice and not by obligation... But while people are struggling to create a language to encompass these new relations, a way of expressing our connections that is neither dismissive "just friends" nor the archaic language of kinship, another language is being developed. It is a technical and legal language, reaching in the very opposite direction. With all of the caring and nurturance removed we are hearing about "contracting couples," "surrogate mothers," "genetic parents," "gestational motherhood," "custodial" and "noncustodial parents"...this language is a guide to a very different social reality. While on the other hand we are trying to think of children as people, deserving respect

> and needing care, on the other hand our society is also coming to think of children as products.

As changes in technology and social problem constructions alter children's and adult's relationships with one another there is one area where their social worlds are joined - as consumers. The child as consumer represents a 4.2 billion dollar market (Kline, 1989). Children are not only interested in products they are also heavily courted by advertisers and manufacturers. Beginning as early as age three children can recognize brand names - knowing Nike is a name of a particular shoe, for instance. In their role as consumers children and adult worlds converge. This convergence has worried some who perceive marketing strategies as placing parameters on children's play and imagination (Kline, 1989). It also concerns those who see consumerism as just one more way in which children are turning into the miniature adults chronicled earlier by Aries.

Challenges such as reproductive technologies, changes in consumerism and social problems like child sexual abuse have all added to revealing some facets of how child/adult relations are not based on natural considerations. These, and other issues reveal the profoundly social nature of they ways children and adults interact and raise questions about what a child or adult is or why sexuality was ever believed to belong solely to adults.

Social Constructionism as a Way of Thinking

Thinking about child sexual abuse and how it became a social problem has been a complicated process of mapping origins, debates and agreements among groups and people who I came to see as claimsmakers. Social constructionism has been particularly useful for understanding how activities shape perceptions of social problems. In a problem that is cast as a tragedy it is sometimes difficult to move beyond the seemingly homogenous view of damaged children, and to see competing, ideological arguments which lead to the definition of what child sexual abuse is and how it is understood. Without the insights of social constructionism it would be difficult to separate out the language and strategies that have come to make discussions of child sexual abuse commonplace.

But social constructionism is not without its problems. As I researched the most recent history of child sexual abuse I was well aware of one of the central tenets and problems of constructionism. To view sexual abuse as a constructed problem is to overlook or at least set aside considerations that might be called "objective." Any issues that could adhere to sexual abuse itself had to be separated out and understood as a part of social activity. I found the relativism of such an approach to be troubling. Children are sexually abused, sometimes sadistically, and

this is a social problem which needs to be addressed, no matter how it is constructed.

In addition to its relativism, I was aware of other problems within constructionism. Having been accused of "ontological gerrymandering" (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985) recent constructionist arguments have tried to avoid the dichotomization of constructionism and objectivism. The conditions that give rise to definitions of social problems, such as social movements, are not objective, they too represent social activities which individuals participate in, and need to be understood as such. Constructionist arguments, however, need to be grounded in historical and structural analyses, which clarify the interactions among history, activity and institutions.

One issue that needs to come more into the foreground of constructionist arguments is the kind of laissez-faire equality with which social problems are treated. Are all social problems created equally? It seems not. Missing children represent a very small fraction of children's experience. Sexual abuse, understood as a continuum of actions, effects millions of children. As a culture, how can a distinction be made about where to put resources, or how to create social policy? Are numbers enough? I would argue that numbers alone cannot make social problems significant, but they can rivet attention and make it easier to ask questions about the way in which unequal

treatment is created. Social constructionism gives a certain power to sociologists and others studying social problems - it allows human activity to be the central focus of analysis. And any analysis that reveals the ways in which people are actively involved in drawing attention to or creating an arena around a social problem, also holds within it the promise that people can alter conditions which are harmful and create social change. It is empowering.

The lessons of applying social constructionism to child sexual abuse are plentiful. I have come to see language not as simply an association of words to a problem, but as a powerful mechanism, shaping reality. In a similar vien I view silence as another form of speech; one which became part of each discourse about child sexual abuse. Perhaps most importantly, I have learned that the definitions of social problems reveal not just the social construction of a particular problem, but also the normative condition that the problem is covertly measured against. The sexually abused child reveals layers of construction of childhood itself and in the final analysis illuminates the topography of the contested terrain that exists between childhood and adulthood.

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