The interpersonal relationships in families with father-daughter incest: the fathers perspective
by Gayle Arlene Wash

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
Home Economics
Montana State University
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Abstract:
In recent years, the problem of sexual abuse within the family system has become increasingly evident
to researchers and helping professionals. This study used a qualitative approach to explore the
interpersonal relationships of families with father-daughter incest from the father’s perspective. The
sample consisted of twenty father-daughter incest offenders. The investigator conducted an intensive
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time, subjects perceived their role in the family as breadwinner and head of household. All subjects
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Consequently, they were unable to communicate their needs to family members. They reported using
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by
Gayle Arlene Wash

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Home Economics

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

June 1989
APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Gayle Arlene Wash

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the problem of sexual abuse within the family system has become increasingly evident to researchers and helping professionals. This study used a qualitative approach to explore the interpersonal relationships of families with father-daughter incest from the father's perspective. The sample consisted of twenty father-daughter incest offenders. The investigator conducted an intensive interview with each subject separately, using an interview guide designed to gather information about subject's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. As they were completed and transcribed, the interviews were analyzed to explore for emerging patterns and concepts.

The overall pattern emerging from the study revealed that the subjects came from backgrounds typified by their own fathers being absent or very abusive. This type of childhood environment was not conducive to subjects learning how to fill their roles as husbands and fathers in their families of procreation. The fact that they did not receive adequate nurturing in their childhoods suggested they entered into their families of procreation emotionally deprived and in need of nurturing. At the same time, subjects perceived their role in the family as breadwinner and head of household. All subjects reported being unable to express themselves. Consequently, they were unable to communicate their needs to family members. They reported using anger as a way of gaining control and sex as a means of accomplishing intimacy. Prior to the abuse, the men typically experienced a loss (often in their provider role) which reportedly impacted their sense of self worth. Subjects reported feeling threatened and powerless when this loss occurred. Anger, which was used as an attempt to reinforce subjects' sense of control and power, only served to distance family members. This reinforced the men's sense of powerlessness. It was then that the incest typically occurred which was, for some, a pathological attempt to regain power, and for others, a pathological attempt at intimacy and closeness.
Marriage and the family are recognized as universal social institutions. No society has ever existed without them. In fact, most functions essential to the perpetuation of a given society are carried out through these two institutions (Christensen, 1985). Anthropologists say that like the family, the incest taboo is also a universal phenomenon. Across cultures, this taboo has varying consequences, but among the most basic of these is the formation of the child's concept of self as an individual separate from the family. By defining and limiting the degree of closeness among family members, the incest taboo is one of society's mechanisms for encouraging appropriate individuation (Rist, 1979). In 1931, Malinowski expressed the importance of the incest taboo for the building of a stable family:

"...The sexual impulse, which is in general a very upsetting and socially disruptive force, cannot enter into a previously existing sentiment without producing a revolutionary change in it. Sexual interest is therefore incompatible with any family relationship, whether parental or between brothers and sisters, for these relationships are
built up in the presexual period of human life and are founded on deep psychological needs of a nonsexual character. If erotic passion were allowed to invade the precincts of the home it would not merely establish jealousies and competitive elements and disorganize the family but it would also subvert the most fundamental bonds of kinship on which the further development of all social relations is based. . . . (Cited in Shepher, 1983, p. 139-140)

Although recent years have shown a significant increase in the number of detected incest cases in this country, it is still estimated that for every reported case, at least twenty-five go undetected (Finkelhor, 1984). Finkelhor states that because incest is so tightly concealed within the family, it is hard to come up with any hard data regarding its incidence, but he believes that no more than two of every five incest victims ever receive any form of treatment.

Incest occurs at all levels of society and in families that appear completely normal to outsiders. Eighty-five percent of reported incest victims are female, and father-daughter incest—which accounts for seventy-five percent of reported cases—is generally considered to be the most harmful (Stark, 1984). According to Shapshay and Vines (1982), father-daughter incest is becoming a national problem.

Because of the strength of the incest taboo and the secrecy that surrounds the incestuous relationship,
numerous myths have formed as to how and why incest occurs. The purpose of this research was to study the phenomenon of father-daughter incest. In order to better understand the family context in which incest develops, the study focused on the father's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system. General research questions addressed were:

1. How do incestuous fathers view themselves in their sex-role?
2. How do incestuous fathers satisfy their intimacy needs?
3. What is the incestuous father's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system?
4. How is interpersonal distance regulated in the marital relationship of the incestuous family?
5. In what kinds of family systems does father-daughter incest occur?

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, sex-role, incest, intimacy, and family system are defined as follows:

**Sex-role.** The term sex-role refers to how a person perceives him/her self to be in reference to masculine and feminine. According to Bem (1978), individuals are
said to be in a sex-typical role who are in tune with the cultural definitions of sex appropriate behaviors for a given role, and who then use these definitions as the ideal standard for which to govern their own behavior. Bem further states that masculine (e.g., ambitious, self-reliant, independent, assertive), is considered to be the male sex-typical role and feminine (e.g., affectionate, gentle, understanding, sensitive), the female sex-typical role. Hence, a sex-typical male is motivated to keep his behavior consistent with the idealized image of masculinity. He does this by choosing behaviors and attributes that enhance this image and avoiding those that do not. It follows then, that the sex-typical female will keep her behaviors consistent with the idealized image of femininity. On the other hand, Bem reports that individuals who consistently display high levels of behavior in both domains are said to be androgynous, and individuals who consistently exhibit behaviors that are neither masculine or feminine are typed as undifferentiated.

Incest. A medical definition of incest does not exist, and legal definitions vary from state to state. Forward (1978) defines incest as any overtly sexual contact between people who are closely related or who
perceive themselves to be closely related including step-parents and step-siblings. According to Forward, "Whenever a special trust that exists between a parent-figure or sibling is violated by a sexual act then that act becomes incestuous" (p. 3).

**Intimacy.** This term is from the Latin derivative of intimare: to put, bring, announce, make known; which is subsequently derived from intimus, superlative of intus meaning within. The contemporary definition of intimacy is to make known the innermost parts of ourselves (Talmadge & Talmadge, 1986).

**Family System.** This term is derived from systems theory (Beavers, 1985; Kantor & Lehr, 1975; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). For systems theorists, the family is not seen as a mere collection of individuals; it is seen as a whole--greater than the sum of its parts. It is believed to be a coherent composite that behaves as an irreducible unit. The behavior of every individual in the family is seen as being related to and dependent upon all of the others. Instead of member's interactions being viewed as occurring in a linear fashion where something in the past produces something in the present, all aspects of interaction--cognitions, behaviors, and feelings--are seen as part of ongoing
circular loops or repetitive cycles. Other systems concepts important for further understanding how members interact within the family system are:

Process: Refers to how a family interacts rather than what (content) is said.

Patterns: Recurring interactions in the family system.

Transgenerational patterns: Patterns of interaction carried down by parents from their families of origin into the family of procreation.

Roles: Repetitive patterns of behavior by which family members fulfill family functions.

Rules: Redundant or regular patterns of interaction which guide behavior and function to preserve homeostasis or equilibrium in the family system.

Boundaries: Rules (as described above) defining who participates in the family system and how.

Power: In a family system, power is measured by one's ability to bring about or by one's ability to resist change in the system. Thus, those members who are most able to regulate the amount of change occurring in the system are viewed as being the most powerful.

Distance regulation: Members in the system regulate distance (physical and psychological) between themselves and others in the way that they communicate to each other. Those members holding the most power in the system are able to regulate the distance between themselves and others in order to accomplish what they want to accomplish.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intimacy and Sex Role

As social beings, humans have a strong need to be connected to one another in mutual interdependence. In fact, relationships with others lie at the very core of human existence (Talmadge & Talmadge, 1986). Reis, Senchak, and Solomon (1985) found that the formulation of intimate relationships is important for individual's psychological and physical well being. The process of forming relationships is usually described as a transition across levels of intimacy (Talmadge & Talmadge, 1986). One can reasonably assume that the intimate heterosexual relationship serves to satisfy many intimacy needs for most individuals. However, gender differences do exist in the ways that males and females seek to satisfy these needs (Critelli, Myers, & Loos, 1986; Fitch & Adams, 1983; Friedland, 1982; Jones & Dembo, 1986; Schiedel & Marcia, 1985; Speisman, Bartis, White & Costos, 1985; Williams, 1985).

According to Stephen and Harrison (1985) sex differences have been found in several dimensions of
communication behavior relevant to the formation and development of intimate relationships. The following studies (cited in Stephen & Harrison) revealed sex differences in empathy (Hoffman, 1977), self-disclosure (Derlega & Chaiken, 1976; Jourard, 1971; Levinger & Senn, 1967; Rubin et al., 1980), eye contact and body orientation (Mehrabian, 1969), management of personal space (Buchanan et al., 1976), the meaning of touch (Nguyen et al., 1975), accuracy of decoding nonverbal information (Isenhart, 1980), and control in problem-solving situations (Blaker & Pederson, 1980).

When examining intimate behavior, many researchers draw upon Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of human development. Erikson proposes a series of eight stages of growth for the individual with each stage having a specific conflict to be resolved. The theoretical basis for Erikson's developmental model is the epigenetic principle. This principle states that at birth, the individual has a few basic biological elements which over the lifespan combine and recombine with societal demands and forces to form a unique and complex entity. A basic assumption of Erikson's theory is that the individual's ego is the underlying structure in psychological development. He believes that ego strength is the primary agent for proper psychological
functioning. He postulates that if the individual does not successfully resolve the conflicts at each of the eight stages, ego development is hampered and, consequently, so is the individual's future psychological growth (Salkind, 1985).

In Erikson's sixth stage (young adulthood, ages 20-30), intimacy is the goal of development. According to Erikson, intimacy represents commitment on the part of individuals to each other. There is a strong effort to develop real and meaningful close physical and psychological relationships. At one end of the developmental continuum of this stage, which is intimacy vs. isolation, the capacity to be intimate occurs. At the other end, isolation results. With isolation, the individual experiences a sense of ostracism, despair, and loneliness (Salkind, 1985). Erikson defines intimacy as "the capacity to commit [oneself] to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments" (p. 263). Even though Erikson's definition differs from the one used for the present study, many of the researchers cited in this review used his theory as a base for their work. These researchers found self-disclosure to be the central component of intimate behavior.
Using all male samples, Orlofsky, Marcia and Lesser (1973); and Orlofsky (1975) defined five intimacy statuses based on Erikson's theory to measure individual's styles of dealing with interpersonal relationships. The most defining criteria for the breakdown of statuses on this measure had to do with the level of communication characteristic of the individuals. Using the same instrument on an all male sample in a later study, Orlofsky and Ginsburg (1981) found that those individuals who measured highest in intimacy were highly self-disclosing in their relationships. They concluded that intimacy with others is associated with openness to and the ability to conceptualize affective experience. Prager (1983) conducted a similar study using both male and female subjects. The methodology for her study appeared solid with both the sample and the procedure being appropriate for the problem. Conclusions reached by this author clearly answered the research problem and the interpretations of her findings contributed to the understanding of intimacy development. Prager found that females evidenced a higher rate of self-disclosure than males. However, this sex difference did not hold for married subjects. Plus, marrieds had a higher measure of self-disclosure than single or divorced
subjects. Prager concluded that the willingness to verbally share a broad range of private information and feeling to one's romantic partner is most likely associated with one's developed capacity for intimacy. This capacity emerged as a consequence of coping with the intimacy crisis (Erikson's 6th stage of psychosocial development). Prager (1983) stated that even though Erikson's 1968 study focused primarily on the physical aspects of intimacy, more recent research has indicated that verbal self-disclosure is viewed as the central component of intimacy by the general population (Waring, McElrath, Mitchell, & Derry, 1981). In keeping with this notion, Tolsedt and Stokes (1983) concluded that most operational definitions of intimacy used in research have emphasized self-disclosure as the primary determinant of intimate behavior. Jourard (1975) stated that through self-disclosure, the self is revealed to the other permitting greater intimacy, and to the self, permitting greater emotional differentiation and self-awareness. According to Jourard, self-disclosure is both a "symptom" and a means of psychological health.

Fitch and Adams (1983) discovered that males and females differ in the way that they seek to resolve the intimacy crisis. Their study revealed that issues related to occupational identity were more important for
males. Whereas, issues related to establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships were more salient for females. However, researchers Marcia & Friedman (1970), and Gilligan (1982), suggested that because Erikson focused on male populations when forming his theory on intimacy development, it is not adequate for describing the females' intimate behaviors. Gilligan concluded that women need to be understood on their own developmental terms. She discussed the necessity of creating new models that focus specifically on women's development.

Jones and Dembo (1986) studied intimate behavior from a different perspective. In contrast to the research on intimacy that traditionally focused on adolescents who had passed through Erikson's 5th and 6th stages of psychosocial development, these authors discovered that intimate relationships can become a part of the individual's experience somewhere in middle childhood. They examined intimacy as experienced in best friendships with respect to sex-differences and sex-roles, along with the development of components of intimacy in childhood and adolescence, and the possible interrelationship of intimacy and ego identity. Jones and Dembo concluded that socialization patterns are the basis for sex differences in intimacy. They reported
that in virtually all research, males measured lower than females on sex-differences in intimate behaviors. They also concluded that sex-typed males are at a disadvantage with regard to intimacy development when compared to females and androgynous males. Overall, this research seemed technically sound. The methodology was well presented, results were clearly illustrated, and findings were reported for every hypothesis. Supporting the above study, adrognous males were also reported by Lavine and Lombardo (1984) to disclose at significantly higher levels than sex-typical males.

Coleman (1981) reported that just when males most need to learn intimacy, they are pushed into striving for autonomy and achievement. He stated that males learn to physically survive at the expense of becoming intimately involved. They end up looking for intimacy by seeking physical satisfaction in relationships. In addition, Jones and Dembo (1986) stated that the development of intimate behaviors for the sex-typed male might be better if unrealistic social expectations were less influential.

In a study of 252 men and women in close relationships, Friedland (1982) found highly significant gender differences in sex-linked orientations to expressiveness and caring. Women in this study
demonstrated a personal pattern marked by verbal and emotional expressiveness, and men displayed a pragmatic orientation characterized by emotional and verbal reserve. When relationship partners differed in their orientations, conflict and lowered relationship satisfaction were common. In addition, Tolstedt and Stokes (1983) found that independent of verbal and affective intimacy, physical intimacy plays only a small part in determining perceived marital satisfaction.

In a survey of over 5000 men and women, McGill (1985) attempted to explain men’s relational behavior. Although his work was reportedly quite extensive, empirical evidence of the results were not presented. McGill’s study revealed that men and women perceive intimacy very differently. He concluded that sex seems to be the supreme intimacy for men. It serves as both an expression of emotion and as a substitute for emotion. In the absence of other kinds of intimacy, sex is both the message and the medium, the means to an end. In contrast, McGill reported that women are more likely to perceive sex to be only one of the many aspects of intimacy. He stated that women appear to exhibit a full range of intimate behaviors, which may include the sharing of experiences, the depth and breadth of personal knowledge, and a concern for relationships.
Clearly, self-disclosure is a necessary component for the development of intimate relationships, and as alluded to earlier, Jourard (1975) suggests that it is important for one's psychological well-being. Empirical evidence to explain gender differences in the orientation to intimacy is scarce. However, the literature implies that the sex-typical male seeks to meet his intimacy needs through physical expression, while the female tends to satisfy her needs in a variety of ways. This would suggest that traditional socialization practices in America might well be detrimental to the well-being of the sex-typical male.

Questions derived from the above studies were:

1. How does the father in the incestuous family view himself in his sex-role?
2. What is his perception of intimacy?

Incest and the Family system

Herman and Hirschman (1981) conducted a study on father-daughter incest using forty women who had had incestuous relationships with their fathers. A control group of twenty women whose fathers had been seductive but not overtly incestuous was selected for comparison. More of the women who had experienced overt incest reported that their fathers had been violent, and
mothers in these families were more often described as ill or disabled. The mothers were also absent from the home more often than the mothers in the control group. Problems most commonly reported for the mothers in the overtly incestuous families were undiagnosed alcoholism, psychoses, and depression. Empirical studies on incest using this large of a sample plus a control group are difficult to perform due to the unavailability of the population. Even though random sampling was not possible, leaving room for other variables to influence the results, the study seemed relatively solid, and the conclusions appeared convincing. Blair and Rita Justice (1979) concluded that mothers in incestuous families are often frigid and want no sex with their husbands. They implied that this lack of sexual interest leads to dissatisfaction on the part of the husband who then turns to the daughter for sexual fulfillment. In a review of the literature, McIntyre (1981) reported that researchers have been quick to pinpoint the mother's compliance as a crucial role. He cited four studies which highlighted the role of the nonparticipating mother. McIntyre concluded, however, that a patriarchal culture and male dominance set the stage for incest to occur. In contrast, Raphling, Carpenter, and Davis (1967) found that the typical father involved in an
incestuous relationship with his daughter is a man in his 30's or 40's who is commonly an ineffectual, nonaggressive, dependent man who assumes little responsibility for his family.

An early study (Bender and Blau, 1937) cited in Ralphling et al., (1967), found that in many instances, the child actively seduces the father when seeking affection and security from him. According to them, this leads to a confusing relationship in which paternal affection and sexuality merge. In addition, Thorman (1983) writes that incestuous daughters appear to have positive feelings toward their fathers and negative feelings toward their mothers.

In all of the above studies, the explanation for the occurrence of the incest, whether it was medical, psychodynamic, or behavioral, was based on a linear model. The etiology of the incest was conceived in terms of a prior event--disease, emotional conflict, or learning history--and one individual was usually considered to be the center of the pathology. These explanations, however, do not seem sufficient when the incest is understood to be occurring within the context of the family system. A more complete explanation would be in keeping with the systems perspective, where the behavior of every individual in the family is seen as
being related to and dependent upon all of the others. A body of literature suggests that there are patterns of dynamics common to incestuous families (Cohen, 1983; Hoorwitz, 1983; Shapshay & Vines, 1982; Taylor, 1984; Vander Mey & Nef, 1982).

Using the systems theoretical perspective, Trepper and Barrett (1986) stated in their book that the following things often contribute to the occurrence of incest: (a) the family has a strict hierarchical nature with inflexible rules and stereotypic sex-roles; (b) the family is isolated from or suspicious of others; (c) the family looks to itself to satisfy individuals' emotional needs, and it rallies when outsiders threaten the sanctity of the system.

From their literature review on father-daughter incest, Swanson and Biaggio (1985) concluded that the organization of the incestuous family had broken down. Members appeared to be bound together primarily by their intense fear of desertion and family dissolution. These authors reported that the external appearance of the family was often unremarkable, and even normal, but on closer examination the pathological internal mechanisms of the family became apparent. According to Swanson and Biaggio, the family structure was typically rigid and patriarchal with the father often maintaining his
dominant position through violence and threats. The marital relationship was often distant or strained, and the family tended to be socially isolated, engaging in only superficial contacts with the outside community. Swanson and Biaggio concluded that the incest functioned to hold the family together. The father was seen as the key element in maintaining family unity with the realization that disclosure of the incest would likely result in family dissolution.

Supporting the above, Larson and Maddock (1986) cited Bowen (1978) as reporting that incestuous families are often characterized by boundary diffusion, i.e., members are lacking in autonomy. Bowen states that when family members are lacking in autonomy, personal boundaries become diffuse and members' interactions produce symbiotic relationship patterns, i.e., every member feels that their survival is dependent upon the emotional and psychosocial status of the other family members. If members in these families risk difference or individuality they are viewed as threatening to the system. According to Larson and Maddock, the above dynamics produce a set of dysfunctional interaction patterns that form a lifestyle directed at overcoming a pervasive sense of intrapersonal and interpersonal emptiness.
Gutheil and Avery (1977) discovered similar family dynamics in a case study. They reported that the marriage in this family was plagued with chronic sexual difficulties and significant separation. Plus, the line between inside and outside the family unit was seen by family members as a sharp dividing line serving as a boundary to protect family members from threatening external forces. In addition, Gutheil and Avery concluded from their literature review that a fairly consistent family configuration exists in families with father-daughter incest. According to them the mothers in such families are typically described as feeling unloved by their own mothers and as a consequence, shun the maternal role. Instead, they unconsciously demand to be mothered by their daughters. Fathers in these families are reported to have suffered analogous rejections by their parents and maintain strongly dependent but fearful ties to their mothers. Many fathers are reportedly alcoholic, feel inadequate, and are chronically anxious. In compliment to their wives, their masculine identity feels imperiled and strong dependency wishes are disguised as genital strivings. The authors reported that for this reason, when the marital relationship reaches an impasse the father turns to the daughter as a relief from a fear of abandonment.
Although this case study did allow for an indepth study of the problem, it should be noted that the researchers adapted a psychodynamic view in reaching their conclusions which suggests that their interpretations are highly subjective. Supporting the above findings, Finkelhor (1980) reported that among incestuous family systems, a commonality of power dynamics exists. He stated that in these families, the incest is generally viewed as a situation where a more powerful person is taking advantage of a less powerful one. In fact, Finkelhor reported that in abusive families, the incest generally gravitates toward the relationships of the greatest power differential, i.e., the least powerful is abused by the most powerful. However, it is important to note that Finkelhor views the abuse as being related to the abusers perception of a lack of or a loss of power.

In her literature review, Kate Rist (1979) discovered a clear picture of the incestuous family pattern. She found that occurrence of overt father-daughter incest in the nuclear family depended upon five conditions: (a) the daughter took over the mother's role, becoming the central female figure in the household; (b) an impaired sexual relationship existed between the parents; (c) the father was unwilling to
have sexual relations outside of the family; (d) a fear of disintegration and abandonment was shared by all of those involved, and; (e) the nonparticipating mother either consciously or unconsciously sanctioned the incest.

The presence of certain patterns such as those in the incestuous family suggests that family members influence one another through their relationships. When the incest is viewed in this context, it seems possible that no one member is responsible for its occurrence. All members in the system can be seen as contributing. In fact, the incest is viewed not as the problem, but as an attempted solution. Along with other interaction patterns and relationships between family members, the incest serves as a mechanism to maintain homeostasis or equilibrium in the dysfunctional family system. For instance, along with the daughter’s behavior and the father’s behavior, the mother’s illness or absence from the home is seen not as the cause of the incest, but as a part of the interaction pattern that occurs within the incestuous family.

Some researchers have proposed explanations of the dynamics operating in the incestuous family. However, empirical studies using a systems theoretical focus are scarce. More research based on this perspective is
needed in order to facilitate the understanding of how incest occurs and is maintained in the family system.

Questions explored from the above studies were:

1. What is the incestuous father’s perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system?

2. How is interpersonal distance regulated in the marital relationship of the incestuous family?

3. In what kinds of family systems does father-daughter incest occur?
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative approach. Qualitative research seeks to generate an interpretative understanding of the meaning of experiences to persons within a particular group or culture. For studying families, this approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the process and variation in family behavior than would have been possible with a quantitative method (Soloway & Smith, 1986). Because quantitative methods are designed primarily for the purpose of hypotheses testing, the investigator must already know what it is he or she is going to discover. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is intrinsically exploratory. So, while it still retains the proper ideals of hypotheses testing research—sound reasoning and empirical testing of theory—it departs from the narrow confines of the deductive, hypothesis testing model to objectively explore and describe the meaning of individual's experience (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

This design drew heavily on the work of Soloway and Smith (1986). According to them, the researcher first
develops a preliminary conceptual framework out of the literature review. From this preliminary framework, concepts are defined, broad research questions are formed, and a sample is determined. Although the concepts are initially formed solely by the literature, new concepts emerge once the research begins and new information is gathered. Glasser and Strauss (1967) suggest that this process gives way to the discovery of grounded theory: theory derived from data that is systematically obtained and analyzed in qualitative research.

Sample and Procedure

Twenty father-daughter incest offenders were chosen to participate in this study. These men were both natural fathers and step-fathers who were at various stages of treatment in group therapy for sexual abuse. A control group was considered to be unnecessary for this project, because its purpose was not to compare groups, but to explore and describe the meaning of relationships and interaction patterns in the incestuous family system.

Sample Characteristics. The sample consisted of 14 step-fathers and 6 natural fathers. Their ages ranged from 29 to 52 years old with a mean age of 40. The
subjects came from a wide range of occupational and educational backgrounds. Their duration of treatment at the time of the study ranged from 7-48 months. The average length of treatment at the time of the study was 20 months. The victims' ages ranged from 5-15 years old with a mean age of 10.

Group facilitators working at sexual abuse clinics throughout the state of Montana were used to obtain the sample. The investigator contacted these facilitators by telephone and described the proposed research. The facilitators in turn requested participation in the study from those men in their groups who were father-daughter incest offenders. After explaining the research to these men, the facilitator asked each of them to fill out a consent form (See Appendix A ) signifying whether or not they were interested in participating in the study. To assure that subjects' participation was not coerced, and to protect their anonymity as participants, the men were asked to return their consent forms directly to the investigator in the stamped, self-addressed envelopes provided with each form. The investigator then contacted those men expressing interest and further explained the research project to them, informing them of their rights as participants. Individual appointments were then
arranged with each man who volunteered to be interviewed. Upon meeting with these men the investigator gave each of them a form letter describing the research purpose, process, issues of confidentiality and issues of consent (See Appendix A).

In collecting the data, the investigator conducted an intensive interview with each subject. The interview, which lasted about three hours, was based on an interview guide (see Appendix B) consisting of open ended questions. These questions, which were asked of every subject, were designed to gather information about subject's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system, and how he viewed himself in his family context. The particular order and wording of the questions varied from interview to interview so that the investigator could probe for meaning and focus on those issues uniquely important to each respondent. The questions were derived from the study's five general research questions:

1. How do incestuous fathers view themselves in their sex-role?

2. How do incestuous fathers satisfy their intimacy needs?
3. What is the incestuous father's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system?

4. How is interpersonal distance regulated in the marital relationship where father-daughter incest occurs?

5. In what kinds of family systems does father-daughter incest occur?

As a way of gathering additional information about family interaction patterns and relationships, the investigator also used a family genogram with each subject. Family genograms (See Appendix C) are diagrams used to chart family members and their relationships. Males and females are represented by different symbols, and connecting lines are used to define how family members relate to one another (Nichols, 1984).

According to Paul & Paul (1982), it is important to examine a family's earlier history, because unconscious images existing in family members' minds operate as unrecognized forces, and these forces serve to recreate scenes from earlier generations in the family system. By charting relationship information on the genogram, the observer is better able to see the repetitive and connecting interaction patterns (transgenerational patterns) which occur in family systems over several
generations. These genograms were not used for statistical analysis, but were simply used to explore for additional information regarding subject's perception of his family's interpersonal relationships.

Analysis

Objectivity, which is the essential basis of all good research, is the simultaneous realization of as much reliability and validity as is possible. When doing qualitative research, reliability is determined by the degree to which findings are independent of accidental circumstance (Kirk & Miller, 1986). To facilitate the reliability of this study (a) all subjects responded to the same set of open ended interview questions, (b) all interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim, and (c) the investigator and one other coder analyzed the data separately.

According to Kirk and Miller (1986), validity is the degree to which findings are interpreted correctly. To assure the validity of the present findings, the investigator checked out her interpretations as she collected the data by using her own words to repeat back to the subjects what she understood them to be saying. Validity was further enhanced by the fact that even though two coders analyzed the data separately, their
interpretations of the emerging concepts and patterns were found to be identical.

In order to protect subjects' identity, all identifying information was replaced with fictitious names and numbers as the audiotapes were transcribed. To eliminate the possibility of voice identification, the audiotapes were destroyed when the transcribing was completed. Raw data consisted of the transcribed interviews and the completed genograms.

Analysis of the data began concurrently with the data collection. As the interviews were completed and transcribed they were reviewed separately by the two coders. Emerging patterns and concepts were coded by highlighting them with different colors. Early coding was guided by the preliminary framework, since the initial focus of the analysis was to answer the basic research questions. For example, different colors were used to identify: (a) how the subject perceived himself in his sex-role; (b) what was the subject's perception of intimacy, and how did he behave when he wanted to be close; (c) how did the subject view the interpersonal relationships in his family system; (d) what was the subject's perception of how interpersonal distance was regulated in his marriage relationship; and (e) in what kinds of family systems does father-daughter incest
occur. However, once the process of collecting and analyzing the data was underway, new patterns and concepts emerged. For example, when exploring the concept of distance regulation, i.e., how subjects interacted when they wanted to be close or distant, the concept of power emerged. Subsequent interviews then included probes to explore for additional information on power, and future coding identified it as a separate concept.

As the patterns were identified, and the relationships among them began to emerge, hypotheses (suggested answers to the research questions) were developed (see Appendix D). Once developed, the hypotheses were placed in theoretical context by checking them out with the relevant literature. For example, Kanter and Lehr's (1975) theory on distance regulation facilitated the understanding of how power is distributed in the incestuous family system. According to these authors, distance is regulated among family members through the way that they communicate to each other, and those members holding the most power in the family system are able to effect what they want to accomplish when they want to accomplish it by regulating the distance between themselves and other family members (Kanter and Lehr, 1975).
Glasser and Strauss (1967) emphasized that hypotheses generated from exploratory research have, at first, only the status of suggested, not tested, relations among categories and their properties. Further, generating these hypotheses requires evidence enough only to establish a suggestion—not a piling up of evidence to establish a proof. According to Glasser and Strauss, even though hypotheses may seem unrelated in the beginning, as the concepts and patterns emerge, develop in abstraction, and become related, their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework, which is the core of emerging theory. This core then becomes the theoretical guide to the further collection and analysis of the data. For example after reviewing several interviews, it became evident that all of the subjects had experienced a sense of powerlessness around the same time that the abuse occurred. The following illustrates how this pattern and the concept of power was checked out.

Q. What is power?

R. Being able to express myself.

This subject had been in treatment for one and a half years, so it was very possible that his concept of power had changed.

Q. What was power to you before treatment?
R. Physical strength....control was probably my biggest—other than physical strength—was just control. Uh..getting people to do things my way. You know..

Q. How would you describe power in a family system before treatment?

R. People listening to me. Uh..

Q. Who had the power in your family in your first marriage?

R. I'd say I did.

Q. All through the marriage?

R. More or less. I think it was on a --depends on what the issue was. If it was over the lack of or of no importance to me, she could have all the power she wanted. If it was an important issue, I had all the control.

Q. How about in this family now. Who had the power in the first years of the marriage?

R. I did.

The subject described a change in the power structure:

Q. Who has the power now?

R. I'd say it was jointly split in between the two of us. And that is hard for me to get used to. Because, it's not...

Q. How about when the abuse occurred and you were out of control with your drinking (subject reported earlier in the interview that he was alcoholic and that his drinking was out of control at that time). Who had the power in your marriage then?

R. I don't know. I know that I wanted to feel like I was in control, but there was also a real strong side of me that wanted to let her take care of everything.
Q. But if you could go back--put yourself back--right before 'the abuse occurred--right in that period of time--

Even though the subject wanted to be in control, he perceived that his wife was running the family:

R. Just before.... I think I probably--my wife was running the family. I think she was just uh..I still wanted--that's almost a loaded question, because, I mean, I really wanted to think that I was in charge, and I really was in control and all this stuff, but uh...

Q. How were you in control?

R. By bringing the money home, you know, and that was a real important thing for me, to be able to say, 'I'm the breadwinner, and I'm bringing home the money.'

Q. Did you feel like you were in control?

R. No. Huh uh. No, I mean, I really wanted to think I was, you know, but I didn't feel that way.

Q. Who did you feel was in control?

R. ....Actually, I really think that I felt that my wife was............

Early in the data analysis, a common pattern of experience among these men began to emerge. Within this pattern, the concepts of (a) sex-role, (b) hurt-child, (c) intimacy, (d) power, and (e) change consistently appeared. Further data analysis focused on how these concepts fit together in describing the phenomena of incest from the perspective of the incestuous father.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The interview guide used for questioning the subjects was designed to answer these basic research questions:

1. How do incestuous fathers view themselves in their sex-role?
2. How do incestuous fathers satisfy their intimacy needs?
3. What is the incestuous father's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system?
4. How is interpersonal distance regulated in the marital relationship of the incestuous family?
5. In what kinds of family systems does incest occur?

In seeking to answer these questions, the following pattern defining the experience of these men emerged: (a) all of the men perceived themselves to be loners; (b) in their families of origin, most of them saw their fathers as being the dominant figure, and they perceived themselves as occupying that role in their families of
procreation; (c) every one of the men perceived their role in their family of procreation to be that of provider, and the female figure (ie., mother-wife) was viewed as needing to be a nurturing caring person; (d) all, in one way or another, had experienced a painful childhood, which ranged from some of them perceiving their families of origin as being void of love and affection to others reporting their families as being extremely abusive; (e) all of them reported being unable to express their feelings, and all but three reported using sex as a means of satisfying their intimacy needs; (f) they reported using anger to control family members; and (g) the incest typically occurred when the men had experienced a loss (often in their provider role) which they perceived as impacting their sense of self worth and consequently their dominant role in the family.

All of the above suggests that these men who perceived themselves as holding the dominant role in their family system (ie., role of provider and head of the family) were, at the same time, experiencing a sense of hurt child which apparently left them emotionally needy and vulnerable. As long as they perceived themselves to be holding the most power in their family, these men were able to regulate the distance between
themselves and other family members to accomplish what they wanted. However, when they perceived threat to their sex-typical role (ie., loss of job or loss of position as head of family) they experienced a sense of powerlessness. Because they were unable to express themselves effectively, they used anger as a means of trying to regain power. This only served to distance their family members which, in turn, reinforced their sense of powerlessness. The incest, then, appeared to be an attempted solution to this dilemma.

In relating their experience, the men often reported that change had occurred in their perceptions of themselves and their family systems. This change, which was apparently brought about by the discovery of the incest, was reportedly a result of the men's entering into a treatment program for their sexually abusive behaviors.

The following excerpts from one interview illustrate how all of the above concepts fit together to describe the phenomena of incest. In exploring the concept of sex-role with this man, it became obvious that he perceived himself as needing to be the dominant figure and the provider in his family of procreation:

Q. Okay. We're going to talk about you now. We kind of have been, but a little bit more.
It's getting a little more personal. Describe what it means to you to be a man.

R. To be a man, uh, to have a good-paying job so that you can take care of yourself and your family. Uh, (pause) take responsibility for yourself.

Q. What do you think it means to be a woman? What's the role of a woman?

The subject viewed women as needing to be nurturing:

R. The role of a woman--are you talking a wife now or just woman in general?

Q. Oh, whatever. Wife is fine or woman. Wife, probably, yeah.

R. My idea of the role of a wife or woman is taking care of their family, uh, be that getting a second job, helping out with finances. Uh, looking out for the health and welfare of their family.

Q. Okay. Give me five words to describe feminine.

R. Feminine. Uh....

Q. It's okay. If you can't think of five, just give me as many as you can.

R. Caring, loving...(long pause)...I don't know, I can't think of any more.

Q. Masculine. Give me five words to describe masculine.

R. Tough, in control, um (pause)

The concept of hurt child emerged while the subject was answering questions about the interpersonal relationships in his family of origin:

Q. You spoke of physical abuse by your father?
R. Well, maybe I shouldn't have said physical abuse. That was about the most he had done. I would guess it would be more mental abuse. Uh, everybody was scared of him, and I can remember him picking up an ashtray and throwing it across the room and smashing against the wall or a teacup or something like that. And that was real scary. It frightened everybody.

Q. Did your mom and dad fight outwardly?

R. Yeah, sometimes, but not usually. It never seemed to get out of control. My dad would just ignore my mother if he was angry at her about something—for sometimes two weeks at a time. Just, uh, absolutely ignore her.

Q. What did the children do about that as far as...?

R. We walked around on tiptoes. You stayed the hell away from my dad. If you needed anything or wanted to talk, you talked with each other, you talked to my mother. You didn't bother him.

The subject had reported earlier that he was unable to express his feelings to others:

Q. Where do you think you learned that you couldn't express yourself to others?

R. Possibly from my dad.

Q. What message did he give you?

R. The message that you always had to be—not ask stupid questions, figure things out for yourself, not depend on other people, depend on yourself.

While he was being questioned about the relationships in his family of procreation, the subject revealed how he used anger to control family members:
Q. And how were differences handled?

R. My opinion usually won out, because I'd get angry if she wouldn't go along with it.

The meaning of intimacy was expressed in terms of physical closeness:

R. Being intimate with my wife is making love to my wife, uh, going camping, doing things together that seem to improve our relationship.

The subject's perception of power had changed with treatment:

R. Power, now, means being aware of myself.

Q. What did power used to mean to you?

R. Dominating somebody else, specifically, my family. Being the central figure.

The subject perceived his father as using anger to gain power:

Q. Who had the most power in your family as a child?

R. My dad.

Q. How did he get that power? What did he do?

R. By showing anger.

Q. And who had the most power in your family before treatment?

R. Me.

Q. And how did you get that power?

R. Same way. Showing a lot of anger.
On the occurrence of the incest:

Q. ...Can you maybe describe to me how it happened that you decided to be sexual with your daughter?

R. Poor self image.

Q. Okay. What was going on in your life at that time? When that started...

R. I had a-I owned a log truck, and I had to take out bankruptcy with it. It was a real low period in my life. Of course, my wife and I were doing a lot of fighting at that time, too.

Q. Um, what do you think the relationship did for you while it was going on, the sexual abuse, that relationship with your daughter? What purpose did it serve for you?

R. I think it was a way of feeling close to somebody, possibly at the time that I couldn’t feel close to my wife.

Numerous studies (Rist, 1979; Shapshay & Vines, 1982; Stark, 1984; Swanson & Biaggio, 1985) have suggested that the incest functions to hold the family together. The systems theoretical perspective facilitates the understanding of how this is possible. According to this theory, normal family systems are characterized by a dynamic tension between homeostasis and change. While they operate to maintain stability, they are also able to grow and adapt. Dysfunctional families, on the other hand, are systems in which homeostasis takes precedence over change. These
families operate with a set of rigid repetitive interaction patterns that permit only a narrow range of behaviors. Because they are so rigid, the number of their responses is limited. Hence, problems occur when they are unable to adapt to altered circumstance (Nichols, 1984).

Further, family systems have rules on which to operate. When new information enters the system of a healthy family, it is able to adapt by changing the rules to match the information. Instead of changing rules, certain members in a disturbed family will develop symptomatic behavior to preserve the system's homeostasis. The other members maintain the rules by using responses to support the symptomatic behavior. Without a change in the rules, the symptoms persist. For the incestuous family, the change in the system can be viewed as the father's perceived loss of power (i.e., role change). The incest, then, occurs to preserve homeostasis, because the members are unable to change the rules to match the change in the system. In this study, the changes in the system were brought about by a variety of role and power shifts. A number of the men perceived themselves as losing power when they suffered a job loss. Several others reported feeling threatened when their wives began work outside of the home. The
following example illustrates how, when one man suffered a series of losses due to deaths in his family, the abuse occurred:

Subject: .....I was brought up believing that families were supposed to be close just for the sake of being that way. I.. the week after my dad had passed on..that was probably the first day..umm..my friend from the army, he died in ***, and it seemed like it was just a whole chain of them after that. Umm..my dad had one brother..uh..he died a month or so after my mom and a month or so before my wife's dad. So that in a matter of a year or so, it seemed like they was dropping off like flies. Uh..my..the only living ..uh..aunt or uncle of the whole family..uh..was back in **** where they were all from..uh..her husband..my uncle died, I think, a week before the one in ****. My dad's brother was uh..mayor of *** two or three terms. I was..the executor-personal representative of my dad's estate and my mom's umm..other sister wanted me to help with her dad's paperwork. I think there wasn't a time for anybody to do a decent job of grieving. I don't think that's an excuse, but it happened. It was in the midst of all that when I started abusing my daughter.

Later in the interview, the subject further reported that because he was unable to keep up with his business during these losses, it was falling apart at that time also.

Another man told of feeling threatened when his wife went to work:

Q. Can you maybe describe how it happened that you decided to be sexual with your daughter? Can you go back and maybe think what was going on with you then?
R. Well my wife was working at the *** as a bartender, and I had jealous feelings of her working there.

And yet another subject perceived himself as losing power when his wife questioned his authority in parenting his step-children:

Q. So in your early marriage, you felt like you had power, then as time went along, you felt like your wife did?

R. Yeah.

Q. What do you think happened?

R. Again, I think it was the alcohol. Where I wasn't feeling...in control of myself is a lot of it.

Q. So, are you telling me that the alcohol came first?

R. No, it was later.

Q. But only did it come before the loss of power...or did it come after the loss of power?

R. It came about the same time I started feeling that I didn't...wasn't in control.

Q. Okay, so what was causing—if you had to—the arguments is hard—I—. Umm, what do you think caused you to feel like you were losing power. What was happening in your marriage?

R. It was about the time, I think, the arguments started. Uh...and also...about the same time when I was...uh...like if I was trying to correct the kids if they were doing something wrong then the wife would step in...and said, 'No, it's alright if they do this'...and that's when I started feeling (voice shakey)...and I wasn't in control of things.
In order to further define how they worked together to form a pattern of interaction in the incestuous family system, the concepts of (a) sex-role, (b) hurt child, (c) intimacy, (d) power, and (e) change were examined separately.

**Sex-Role**

Barbeau (1982) suggests that much of our acculturation of boys and girls for their adult man-woman roles continues to educate them for patterns of sexual relating that are no longer functional. Barbeau goes on to say that the majority of boys are educated in modes of behavior that place the masculine label upon toughness, the suppression of tender emotions, and the notion of dominance over women. According to her, many men in our culture define their roles in family life solely in terms of being the 'breadwinner'.

Without exception, every subject in the present study perceived himself as needing to be the provider in his family of procreation. Most saw their fathers as being the dominant figure in their family of origin, and they perceived themselves as occupying that role in their nuclear family. They viewed themselves as needing to be strong, tough, and in control. This is
What is the role of a man:

1. A man was to bring home the bacon, and nobody messes with you. I mean, I was the king of the castle. I was the man of the house. I was the boss. I was the controller, the manipulator, the president, dictator, what have you. That's--was the man. Now, it's not necessarily the man of the house, it's the partner.

2. Well, to be a man, I think you gotta be macho, uh, strong and a hard worker.

3. A real man would support his family...I think a good job, support my family and being a good father. I think that's one of them. Then doing the best I can at my job.

4. It used to be just the provider. Income machine, you know, work, pay bill, die, that's it.

5. Uh...the head of the household, umm...the tough guy, the guy that doesn't cry. All those myths, I don't agree with them, but that's the way I would describe a man.

Self worth was strongly intertwined with occupying the role of provider in the family:

1. Yeah, because uh..I've always thought that to be a man you had to be the one that was out there working and providing for your family, and if you didn't have a job or wasn't working that meant that you was no good. Because any man could find a job no matter what it paid.

2. ...Couldn't find a job...my wife had to work to support the family. I think I felt pretty worthless.

One of the men told of attempting suicide when he lost his job:
R. When I lost my job, uh...that's when I tried to attempt suicide and that screwed the family up even more, because I didn't-it didn't happen.

Q. What didn't happen?

R. I didn't die.

Q. Did you attempt this suicide- did this have to do with-you just talked about the job loss? Was that tied into-

R. Yeah. There was no work in town. The *** shut down. Umm..my trade. I couldn't land a job to support our income, that 30,000 a year, you know. I couldn't work for four dollars an hour or minimum wage. So, the best thing to do was to cash in. We had a large policy and she would have done well. Looking at it now, it was foolish.

Women were viewed as needing to be nurturing. The subjects often used the word caring when defining the female role. The examples below are typical responses to the question; What is the role of a woman:

1. Well, I'd have to say kind, loving and caring...

2. My idea of the role of a wife or woman is taking care of their family...

3. ....Uh, I would say to be concerned, teaching. Uh, be there when you need her. Um, a little bit of loving, I'd say when they need a little bit of loving concern. The nourishment.

While these men viewed themselves as needing to be dominant and in control, they, at the same time, appeared to be emotionally needy and vulnerable.
Without exception, every man in the study reported experiencing a painful childhood.

**Hurt Child**

Some of the men experienced their childhood homes as being void of love and affection while others reported being physically and sexually abused. According to Kerr & Bowen (1988), individuals coming from abusive family systems are usually undifferentiated. The differentiated person is able to be in emotional contact with others yet still remain autonomous. In contrast, the undifferentiated individual is ruled by emotion. This occurs because the undifferentiated person has reached adulthood still carrying feelings which are a result of unresolved conflict in his/her family of origin. Because they are so ruled by their emotions, these individuals tend to become emotionally fused with their significant others (they are unable to separate themselves emotionally from them). Consequently, their lack of autonomy results in their either becoming an over conforming individual or by their assuming a pseudo-independence through counter conforming (Nichols, 1984).
The following illustrates how one subject's experience of hurt child apparently resulted in his lack of differentiation:

Q. Describe a typical day for you as a child um..with the step-father.

R. I was real scared. I was real afraid to wake up in the morning. I was wondering what (sigh) it was-I was going to do wrong. If he was going to be mad. I was always afraid that he was going to wake up mad. He was always mad in the mornings. Um..I was afraid. I was afraid I was going to get smacked or something. I was afraid that I wasn't going to be able to do things right (crying) and uh..I remember trying to please him. I remember that was a way to escape a lot of the wrath...was to seem um..seem interested in him to make him feel important, and felt like a cop out to myself, because I knew it was a bunch of crap. (long pause) You want to know what a day was like?

When asked in another part of the interview how he would describe himself to someone who didn't know him, the subject expressed intense emotions which typify the undifferentiated person:

R. I'd say I am an emotional person. I tend to make things larger than life at times...an intense person and sometimes critical, sometimes controlling...compassionate person...caring, needing, helping.

One result of emotional fusion was his intense need for closeness in his family:

R. ...I'd been married for two years and had no emotional contact, and I wanted that, you know, I wanted to feel close to-you know, I was having-I wanted to feel close but knew I wasn't and that's the only thing that I can
say now-that-in that particular way of acting out-that I was searching for-was some sort of uh-a closeness.

Another man related his experiences of hurt child:

Q. What was it like being a child in your family?

R. It was nice at times, when everything was running smooth. Um..my father wasn't drunk, it would be nice.

Q. That was one of the questions I was going to ask you. Alcohol, how much was alcohol used?

R. He-I didn't know at the time. To look back on it, I would never have thought, but now, looking at it, he was an alcoholic. I think every time that he became beligerent with me, he was drunk and my mother drank secretly. But it was a good family. Umm..we..weren't a poor family. We had everything we wanted.

A little later in the interview:

Q. Okay. How often were you physically abused by him?

R. I don't know. Umm..three to four different times physically. Umm..twice sexually.

Q. And you said something about one time you had your head split open.

R. Yeah. He knocked me against the bed.

He described emotional fusion in the early years of his marriage:

R. Well, no. Not the first couple of years. First two-three years, it was..it was like both of us became one. And it was great, and then it...

Later, this need for fusion was extended to his daughter.
R. ...I was failing. I needed to hold on to something. My daughter was that something. At first, it wasn't sexual, but it was very close...always with me.

As adults, many of the subjects found themselves behaving toward their children in the same ways they remembered their parents had behaved toward them. According to Nichols & Everett (1986), patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving are passed down through the generations by what is called a transgenerational process. This process has every bit as real a consequence as the genetic heritage that is passed on by parents. Thus, Nichols & Everett suggest that to fully understand how parents relate to their children, it is necessary to view the relationships from at least a three generational perspective.

The following excerpts illustrate how one subject found himself re-enacting his painful childhood experiences as a parent in his family of procreation:

Q. How about your dad? How did he express it when he got angry?

S. He was..he was uh..had a really wicked temper. Just like me.

Q. What did he do?

R. Well, I remember times when he used to kick us, and uh..a lot of yelling. Everytime he'd whip us, I'd wet my pants, and that's..my brothers did too.

Later in the interview, he described repeating the
patterns of his family of origin:

Q. How did you handle discipline in the family? Who was responsible for disciplining the children?

R. Me.

Q. Did your wife ever have a say in it?

R. Oh yeah, she—she’d discipline them, and then, like one time, I came home from work, and uh, they broke some windows in the garage, and they were in bed and I woke them up and whipped their butts, because they broke the windows. And they—they had already gotten corrected for it already and... I guess I felt like it wasn’t done right.

Q. Is that what your father would have done in the same situation?

R. Oh yeah. He did.

Q. He woke you up and whipped your butt?

R. Yeah, and he did the same thing I did. I mean, I made em—the next day, I made em pick up all the glass without gloves or anything and they cut their fingers, and I said, tough shit, go out there and pick up the rest of the glass. Well, he did the same thing with me only, we broke a bunch of beer bottles... out in front of the garage, and that’s what happened. I mean, it was just like... like I was him... and that’s the way I was raised so I figured it’s the way you’re going to be raised.

Another subject related his experiences of having problems with being affectionate in his family of procreation:

Q. ...Was there ever any physical abuse in any of the families, like with you in your family of origin?
R. The word abuse is....The first thing that comes to mind is my father, the way that he treated us children. He was quick to anger also. I would suspect that I'm very much like him. I remember when...I think he probably spanked us harder, you know....

Later in interview, he described a lack of affection in his family of origin:

Q. How about your mother and father? How do they express it when they want to be close in your observations as a child?

R. As a child? I have no idea. It's rare that I saw them affectionate. There was little between them or between them and us as children......

The subject became very emotional when he described the ideal father as nurturant and loving:

R. Ideal father. It would be very similar. Loving, caring, kind, concerned, interested. Interested in what his children do. Being there...um...showing direction. Just giving guidance, assisting...(at this point, the subject began sobbing).

He described difficulty in breaking the early patterns of not showing affection:

R. Um, I try to be affectionate and it's an effort some of the times. With the younger kids, it's very easy, but as they get older, it's a little bit harder to remember that hugs are important, and holding their hands. Same with my wife, I'm not as affectionate as I should be. I have to think about it and do it.

While using the systems theoretical perspective, one does not normally view the pathology as being carried intrapsychically (Nichols & Everett, 1986).
Instead, it is usually seen to be lying primarily in the family's interaction patterns or the family relationships. Still, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is helpful for understanding how the men in this study responded to their childhood experiences. As a foundation for future development, Erikson (1963) emphasizes the importance of a nurturing environment for the growing child. As children grow, they pass through a series of psychosocial stages. Basic needs must be filled at each stage by the child's caregivers or the child will not develop a healthy ego.

Thirteen of the twenty subjects reported that they missed having a father when asked the question, What was the one thing you missed the most as a child? The men reported most of their childhood abuse as being experienced during the latency age years. Clinicians stress the importance of assuring developmental continuity through these years, emphasizing that the child needs its energies during this time for proper character development (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1983).

It is during latency that the child's normal conception of his own identity is closely tied to the external structure. Thus, the child is developmentally dependent on the parental figures, at this time, for the consolidation of age appropriate identifications.
(Erikson, 1963). Erikson goes on to say that individuals who are not sure of their identity will experience difficulty with establishing interpersonal intimacy in adulthood.

**Intimacy**

A typical response for these men to their painful childhood experience was for them to have difficulty with developing interpersonal intimacy through self-disclosure. When one subject was asked what he believed caused his inability to express his feelings to others, he responded:

R. Because of my dad, and...well the beatings, you know, like when you’re a kid, and you’re crying, and he would be beating you and you would say, a man don’t cry, how do you ever expect to grow up if you’re going to cry. Well, if you’re getting whipped, what are you going to do, and then the crying stopped.

Q. So you shut your feelings down?

S. And the beatings kept on going. That’s how you keep going inside.

Another subject learned to protect himself from feeling while observing his stepfather abusing his mother:

R. I remember crying once, and...after that it was just like a protective shell came over me. I just kinda knew things were happening that were hurtful, but I just pushed the hurt away. I mean, I didn’t let it affect me. I...it was almost as if it was happening outside of my family. You know, I mean, although it was
real close, I mean, it was my family, it was like-like I was removed from it somehow, looking at-looking at it from the outside.

Intimacy has been described as a composite of affection, expressiveness, compatibility, cohesion, sexuality, conflict resolution, autonomy and identity (Talmadge & Talmadge, 1986). Further, intimacy in marriage requires ego strength, power, vulnerability, interdependency, trust, mutuality, and the knowing and seeking of self. According to Talmadge & Talmadge, to risk intimacy is to risk remembering old pain from violations of trust and oneness in early development, because in intimacy what is revealed and shared is that which is deeply personal, basic, and most important. It is experienced almost as the core of being, that which may often have had to been defended from others and even hidden from oneself.

Verbal self-disclosure is viewed as the central component of intimacy by the general population (Waring et al., 1981). Without exception, all of the subjects reported being unable to express their feelings to others. The following man described how he was unable to develop an intimate relationship with his wife, because he was unable to share his feelings and thoughts with her:
Well, I've been what I would term a loner since before grade school, and I have never been able to talk a lot with people. I have said, 'If I don't have anything to say, I won't say anything.', and talking my feeling is one of the areas where I just haven't done it, and when we got married, she kept saying that she wanted a close intimate relationship, which meant sharing of feelings and thoughts, and I feel that I have opened up quite a bit since we got married, but the real sharing still is not there.

Another subject reported being unable to share his feelings when describing his perception of intimacy:

...I guess sharing, uh, what you feel and, like I mentioned before, I don't do that much. And I'm trying to do that more, with my wife in particular. She would like to know what I'm thinking and I think she has a right to know that, and I can see where that would give us a closer relationship. A closer relationship rather than just a good relationship if I was to be more open about my feelings. And perhaps that would help me understand my anger better also.

Although the above two men included a sharing of feelings in their definition of intimacy, seventeen of the twenty subjects responded that, to them, being intimate was strictly sexual. Further, the men reported that when they desired closeness, their only means of expressing it was by being sexual. Following is a typical response. The subject was asked how he behaved when he wanted to be close to someone:

R. Before (treatment) it was always sexual, and I always thought that to be close you had to be sexual. Uh...and that's what it meant,
uh...was...the touching and the kissing and the hugging...and everything was sexual.

Q. What did intimacy mean to you?

R. Sexual. Everything was. You know, if you want to be intimate, you got to be sexual.

Q. Can you say what satisfaction you used to get out of that relationship—that kind of a relationship? If you had to go back and say, 'What did it do for me.' What would you say?

R. Being—trying to be sexual?

Q. Sexual. Yeah, being close through sex. How did that satisfy you? What did it do for you? What pay off did you get?

R. ...I always thought I was loved. Because that’s what I thought sex was—was love...

When another subject was asked what he thought love was before treatment, he responded:

R. Sex and...sex.

Q. Are you talking...okay.

R. I mean...that’s the only way I knew how to express love...and it...like with the boys, I didn’t. I didn’t express love at all, because I didn’t want...I knew I didn’t want to molest them.

When he wanted to be close:

Q. How do you behave when you want to be close to someone?

R. Then, (before treatment) when I wanted to be close to somebody...I would act very sexual. I mean, I was pretty much black and white. That’s the way I...I was....

Q. What satisfaction do you get out of close relationships?
R. Then, was sexual satisfaction. Umm, I never had a close relationship, you know, like with...my mom and dad was...we were never close. Umm...my wife and I weren't even really close. We just...I-I used her, and the only way I used her was for sex, and that's what I got so I felt big.

Q. Describe what being intimate means to you.

R. The sexual, then. I mean, it was just wham bam and thank you mam.

Q. That was intimacy?

R. That was intimacy.

When asked what caused the closeness in his marriage, another subject responded:

R. Sex.

Q. Sex?

R. Yeah. I always thought that no matter what happened; any type of disagreement we had, it could be made okay by being sexual.

Q. Was your wife agreeable to that? Did that seem to be what she felt too?

R. Yeah. Yeah, well...

Q. So you had that in common?

R. We..., I don't know if that was her...I was quite a manipulator. I would uh...in a way...the wanting to be close, to get away from an argument, sex was a logical way to approach being close, because I very much disliked my own feelings in an argument. I didn't like the way I felt. I felt sick, and I wanted to get close, and sex was an easy way to get that intimacy as far as I knew what it was...back and...and like I say, I think I just manipulated her in my own ways to...get that...
Tolstedt & Stokes (1983) suggest that when examining intimate behavior, three aspects of intimacy are important: (a) verbal, which refers to self disclosure; (b) affective, which reflects feelings of closeness and emotional bonding; and (c) physical, which encompasses sex and other physical expressions of love. In a study on the relation of verbal, affective and physical intimacy to marital satisfaction, Tolstedt & Stokes found that measures of verbal and affective intimacy made stronger contributions to intimacy than did physical intimacy. In fact, these researchers discovered that independent of verbal and affective intimacy, physical intimacy plays only a small role in determining perceived marital satisfaction. Yet, the men in the present study reported that when they desired intimacy and closeness, their only means of expressing it was by being sexual. On the other hand, the men reported using anger as their primary communication for demonstrating control and power in their family system.

Power

Kantor and Lehr (1975) use the term distance regulation to define the process whereby individuals use information in the system to regulate the distance between themselves and others. These authors go on to
say that those persons having power in the system are most able to effect distance regulation. The men in this study demonstrated control and power in their family system by using anger. Apparently this happened because they were unable to regulate the distance between themselves and others in more effective ways. The following subject's perception of power illustrates this:

Q. What does power mean to you?
R. I think it's intimidation. Something like that.

Q. How would you describe power in a family system?
R. Same way. Getting somebody to do what you want them to do without them questioning it...

Q. Who would you say had the most power in your family?
R. Me.

The subject used anger to distance himself from family members:

Q. When you don't feel like having anybody around you...period, how do you express that?
R. Probably with anger. I just scream at them or something. Make up some excuse to scream at them so they will leave me alone.

Another man reported using anger as a means of gaining control:

Q. What kinds of things make you angry in your home?
R. When people won't take me seriously. They won't listen to what I'm saying.

Q. What do you do when you get angry?

R. Uh, get real loud, shout, throw things around. Generally terrorize the household.

The anger seemed effective as a control mechanism:

Q. What did your wife and daughter do when you did that?

R. My daughter, generally—when she was smaller—well she always did, run for the bedroom and just stay out of sight until everything had cooled down. My wife would fight back at me until she usually ended up in tears....

Similarly, another man described using anger to communicate his need for control:

Q. What kinds of things make you angry?

R. People that take from me my control over my life.....

Q. What makes you angry in the home?

R. What makes me angry in the home is usually when there is something going on that I don't agree with and instead of sitting and talking about it and being real honest with my wife about it, I'll hang on to my feelings and then I'll get real angry with her...because I didn't say something.

Q. What did you used to do when you got angry?

R. I'd hit the wall and walked over the house and stay gone over night. Took off with a sleeping bag in the car and head up into the woods and stayed that way...or gone off and got drunk. I have hit her on a couple of occasions.......

Sixteen of the twenty subjects perceived their fathers as being the dominant person in the family. As children, they also observed their fathers using anger as a means of distance regulation. The following subject's experience is an example:

R. My father was the head of the family. He expected everybody to do—and demanded everybody do as he asked and he got very angry if you didn't.

Q. What did he do when he got angry?

R. Uh...sometimes he would throw things when I was smaller to get his point across. He never really yelled, but he raised his voice. Everybody in my family was scared of my dad. He didn't have to do a whole lot to get what he wanted done.

Another subject described power as being used to control others in his family of origin:

R. I would say that it is a negative force. The negative force being whoever the controlling person is, because I have seen it both ways, that they're controlling each other and they're also controlling their kids.

He viewed his father as showing power with anger:

Q. Who had the most power in your family as a child?

R. My father.

Q. How did he have that power? What did he do?

R. Verbal and physical both.

The subject used the same means to gain power in his family:
Q. Who had the most power in this family? With your wife?
R. Me.
Q. How did you have it...the power?
R. Same thing. Verbal and physical.

A similar experience is related by this man:

Q. How would you describe power in the family system?
R. The one with the shortest fuse.
Q. That's the one who has the power?
R. Um humm. That's the person that everybody's scared of. It's the person I was scared of. My dad, he had the power. I had the power when we were all together (family of procreation).

Beavers (1985) suggests that, ideally, when two people choose to build a relationship, they will have equal power. Neither will use power maneuvers to control the other. Although this balance is a rare occurrence in real life, healthy couples are on the low end of the scale of overt power differences. According to Beavers, only in situations of equal power can there be intimacy, which is the experience of being open, vulnerable and able to share one's innermost feelings and thoughts. When unequal power exists, the top dog is fearful of exposing weakness, and the bottom dog is fearful that anger will surface. Therefore, the partners remain relatively isolated from each other.
Regardless of how dysfunctional these subjects' families might have been, the precarious equilibrium in the family system apparently remained undisturbed as long as each man perceived himself to be the breadwinner or the dominate figure in the family. However, when the subject suffered a loss which he consequently viewed as threatening his dominate role, he reportedly perceived himself as losing power in the system. It was then that the incest typically occurred.

Some of the men saw themselves as distancing from their family members when they perceived they were losing power:

R. My wife was supporting the family more or less instead of me. My little odd jobs I could pick up wasn't supporting anything. That was about it.

Q. So, how were you feeling about yourself around that time?

R. Worthless, I think. Couldn't find a job...my wife had to support the family. I think I felt pretty worthless.

He saw himself as distancing from his wife:

Q. How did you feel about your wife? Can you remember? That's a long time ago.

R. I still think I was wanting a divorce. I really do, cause I tried everything. She'd threaten a divorce and I'd say let's go...something like that.

Q. What would the divorce have done for you?
R. Wouldn't have done me a bit of good. I mean, it would have hurt me more than anything. She'd have been better off with divorce. I suppose just the freedom part with me, I guess. I remember I tried very hard to get her to go for a divorce. Just about everything I could think about. You know, staying out late building a house...go get drunk...come home three o'clock in the morning. Going to work at six in the morning...not come back until three o'clock the next afternoon.

Others perceived the family members as distancing from them:

R. ...And during these two days I was always telling myself, 'Well she don’t love me. She don’t care how I feel, and she’s picking on me for getting on the kids.' So...

Q. How was she picking on you for getting on the kids? What did she do to pick on you?

R. Telling me not to hollar at them. Like it wasn't my right to...scold them or whatever. That I didn't have that right. But, it was alright if she said, you know, 'Girls, quit running.' But, I couldn't so...

He believed his wife was rejecting him when he began abusing:

R. ...It all started, well like I said, I used to go the the bars and strip shows and stuff like that. Well, then I had it in my mind that my wife and I was...or she was rejecting me, and then you get into depression where you just feel lousy, and at first I started drinking again, and then when it first happened........

Regardless of how the distance was regulated during this time, it appears that each man's perceived loss of power preceded the occurrence of the incest. The
subject who earlier described himself as distancing from his wife when he was unable to find work continued:

Q. And how would you describe your relationship with your wife right at the time that the relationship started with your daughter? How were you and your wife getting along?

R. I wasn’t getting along with her. I was trying to force her into divorce and everything else.

Q. Can you maybe explain why you did that to me? If you had to say why you were distancing from your wife...how would you describe that?

R. I don’t know...I think maybe not a total man, I think. Not being able to support her. Living off of her.

Q. And what does it feel like to be a man? We’re back to that one that you couldn’t answer earlier. You said, ’I wasn’t feeling like a total man.’ So what does it feel like to be a man? When you say, ’I feel like a man’, how would you describe that?

R. I think just job wise and money, and everything else. Self supporting and what have you. Support a family.

This man also perceived his loss of power to be related to his breadwinning role:

Q. How did you have power? Where did you get your power? What did you use for power?

R. Umm...just let them know who was in charge.

Q. How did you do that?

R. Umm...I think it was just...I don’t know...just knowing that...you know, I’m paying the bills.

The abuse began when his wife went to work:

R. Umm...moved back to ***, and for about seven-eight months where...never had a job, and
things were getting pretty...oh..rough.. and uh..my wife finally took a job out of town.

Q. How long had you been together then?

R. Umm..this had been about a year and three quarters, and umm..I was getting depressed, you know, I never had any work or nothing, and uh..she took off and she'd want me to watch (step-daughter). Umm..I didn't like that idea at all. For one reason, I couldn't just get up and leave. I'm the kind of a guy, you know, I've worked all over and when I want to go somewhere, I just leave. So...she was working there, out of town...there...for about a week or so and I start molesting....

Another man described how he perceived himself to be losing control:

Q. Go back to when you were first married and go through the six years that you were married. Did the power stay the same in that relationship?

R. No, it became less when my controlling became more because my powerlessness, my inability to control as much as I wanted to became less, so I became more and more abusive, verbally in particular. But, I also became physically abusive.

Later in the interview, the subject related more about his experience of losing power:

Q. ....I heard you describe...you said in the first part of the relationship you felt you had the power and then it kind of waned and with that you started acting out more?

R. She looked up to me. She felt that I had it and the longer we were together the more she knew I didn't have all the answers. When we first got together she figured I did. But I figured she was pretty vulnerable too....as the years went by and she became more assertive, more capable of taking care of
herself, she needed me less, and I had a hard
time dealing with that.

Along with his work, another man experienced loss with
his passing youth:

Q. What was happening with you in your work, in
that period of time before?

R. It was going down hill. Customers I should
have been calling on once a week, I saw them
maybe once in two months.

Q. What started first? The down hill or you...I
mean...did the job...I'm hearing you say that
you were not relating to the people in your
environment very well...but...and that your job
was going down hill and that you were
drinking...

R. ...the drinking came at the tail end of it.
The business was going down hill. There
wasn't time to take care of it..um..I was
getting older..I was wearing myself out
physically trying to build another house so
we'd have something to retire on for income
and I saw what was left of my youth just being
spent and I heard myself asking a lot of
questions...well why bother kind of thing.
What am I...

After pausing to further reflect, the subject continued:

R. ....I guess I had a tremendous amount of needs
that weren't being met. I didn't tell them
about it very well. Umm..I just silently
expected them to meet it and I don't think any
human could meet half of them. I was...I
felt...and believed I was rejected a lot...and
uh...occasionally I said so, but most of the
time, I just got angry.

Just prior to the incest:

R. ... Umm..my self esteem was going way down
hill rapidly.
Q. What were you feeling bad about yourself for...what...why were you not feeling worthwhile?

R. If I was worthwhile my daughter would want to be around me. Um...was what I figured...and she doesn’t, so I must be worthless...all my efforts are worthless...

Incest. Some of the men in the study described their abuse as an effort to gain closeness and intimacy. Others defined it as a way of gaining control and power. According to Finkelhor (1980), abusers have long term patterns of depression, suicidal feelings, self-contempt, and the inability to trust and to develop intimate relationships in later life. Finkelhor further states that while the abuse tends to gravitate toward the relationships of greatest power differential, it is related to the abuser’s perception of lack of or loss of power. Additionally, even though these are acts of the strong against the weak, they appear to be carried out by the abuser as a means of compensating for their perceived lack of or loss of power. The following responses to the question, What did the sexual relationship with your daughter mean to you, illustrate this attempt to gain power and intimacy. One subject described seeking both power and intimacy:

R. It really didn’t satisfy anything. Created more problems than anything. Didn’t satisfy anything. I vented my lusting feelings that I
had toward her. I definitely feel that I was venting resentment of my wife's actions, through my actions on (step-daughter) which again, didn't do any good. It was...I did not get any sexual satisfaction out of it. There may have been a little bit of feeling of power in there wasn't a whole lot of that...I guess...the need for intimacy...would be what I was striving for. That's one heck of a way to destroy what you're striving for.

For another, it was a way of feeling close:

R. ...that I was searching for some sort of closeness...uh...and that might sound strange, but that's uh...that's what I was trying to do...for a moment, I felt that I was close.

Yet another subject described his offending as an attempt to have power:

R. Umm...at first, I wanted to blame it on the booze and the drugs. It was all...you know, it was the drugs making me do this shit. Well, that's not the way it is. The plain and simple fact is, I did it because I wanted to. I wanted to...I wanted to have all the power. I wanted to have all the power, and...I just figured that's what it took.

And for this man it was an effort to control:

R. It made me feel like I was in control of my life or something. Anyway it gave me a feeling of control or power....

Change

All of the men in this study were participating in a treatment program for sexual abuse. Consequently, during the data gathering process, the concept of change consistently appeared. Along with other things, the men's view of themselves, of intimacy, and of power had changed in varying degrees during treatment. In the
following example, the subject describes how learning to express himself effectively created change in his work place:

R. I think another big change in my life is uh.. being more assertive at work. Uh.. standing up for my own rights now, because I do feel that I have rights. So, uh.. my job's going a lot better, and that's a big change in my life uh.. it's not as stressful.. uh .. it's a lot easier to put up with, and it's a lot easier to do your work if your not stressed all day.

He experienced a change in his view of himself in his sex-role:

Q. And now what do you think is important to be a man?

R. I'd say kind and gentle... and truthful and honest with yourself. Then you can be honest with other people. That's something I haven't always been.

Q. Honest with yourself?

R. And other people. Kinda take a little story and stretch it out and make it sound bigger.

Q. Why do you think you did that?

R. Umm.. makes you sound like more of a man. You know, a man goes out and catches his limit of fish. Not just one or two, but you get your limit.

Q. Why don't you think it's necessary to do that any more?

R. I don't think I have to.

Q. How come?

R. Because, I like being myself.
He also described intimacy as taking on a less sexual meaning:

R. Because...then it always seemed like a job. That...I don't know, I was telling myself that this is what I have to do. To be close, you have to be sexual...and now, no, it's a lot easier just to set down and talk and share yourself...

Individual changes among the men also required reciprocal changes in their family systems:

R. ...before, when I was offending, they were real withdrawn. Never had anything to say. Were fearful...and this was around me and directed to me, and now...uh...they're open, laughing, happy, girls that uh...aren't withdrawn anymore. I'd like to add one thing that I know in my own mind that they're not that way not just because that I've gone-and presently going through treatment. It's the treatment that they also received. That the open lines of communications that we had to deal with this.....

Such changes meant that his perception of his role in the family changed:

Q. Describe what it means to you to be a man.

R. Responsible, be in control of my behavior, to make mistakes and learn from them, uh...to accept others mistakes.

Q. What did it—before treatment, what would you say you would have thought the role of a man was?

R. To bring money home.

Intimacy no longer meant just being sexual:

Q. Describe what being intimate means to you.
R. Sharing feelings, being able to cry, being able to ask somebody to hold me...

Q. Has that definition changed since before treatment?

R. That is my definition after treatment. Uh..before treatment was I had no definition for it. I thought intimacy was sexual. That was the only thing that uh..I thought that’s was the only way I could be close was uh..and I’m not referring to being sexual with my daughters, I’m just talking about being sexual. Intimacy was to sleep with someone, no talking, no feeling, just physical closeness.

According to Nichols (1984), normal families are able to change because they communicate clearly. But, pathological families cling to their rigid, inflexible structures in order to preserve homeostasis. Further, Nichols states that as a consequence of their rigidity, these families become stuck in dysfunctional homeostatic patterns of communication. It seems that for most of the families of the men in this study, the discovery of the incest disrupted this dysfunctional homeostatic pattern. Further, while they were in treatment, the men and their families seemed to have learned new and more effective ways of communicating. Apparently, by learning these new ways of communicating, the men and their families were then able to change the rule structure to accommodate the role changes in their family systems. The above subject illustrated this as he went on to
describe how the rules were changed in his family system:

Q. Okay, in this relationship, (family of procreation) how are decisions made before treatment and then after?

S. Before treatment was the same way. Uh..I dictated the way things were supposed to be and that's the way it was.

Q. Okay and now, how are decisions made?

S. (laughter) Boy, I'll tell you what, this is a-that's a new one, now, actually, sometimes it's more democratic than I'd like-like it to be, because uh-but it does work out, and sometimes it's harder, uh..at times, having joint participation and decision making. But, at this time, it's hard only because I'm still not used to it. It's uh..it's kind of uh..when you're giving up control, it's kind of a scary place to be, because your not used to it, but there's not the gut wrenching feelings that there was before-not the anger and the hate and the feelings of despair...because you're not going to get your way and don't think people are doing what you want them to do uh..uh..everybody has their own opinion now. Every-I mean, ultimately, the mom and dad have the final say........

Further, he related the importance of being able to express himself:

R. It's one real important thing for me in this program...basically, is how to deal with those feelings and how to give them validity. How to bring them out and deal with them. Until you get through all that crap that's behind you, you're never going to be able to deal with what's in front of you, and that's a real important step for me..is to be able to deal with these problems. You know, I'm an emotional person anymore, I really am, and I don't know what to do with it half of the time other than to express it. Before, it was just
cold and hard and uh... didn't have any feelings.

As a result of learning new ways to express himself, he experienced a new meaning of power:

Q. What does—what does power mean to you? What is power?

R. Being able to express myself.

Q. What was power to you before?

R. Physical strength... uh... control was probably my biggest—other than physical strength—was just control. Uh... getting people to do things my way, you know.

He described the rules regarding power in his family system as changing also:

Q. How about in this family? Who had the power in the first years of marriage?

R. I did.

Q. Who has the power now?

R. I'd say it was jointly split in between the two of us.

When describing change in his life, another man put it quite simply:

Q. If you had to say what important changes have taken place in your life, what important changes would you say had happened?

R. Uh, the most important change for me is reaching out to other people. Being able to communicate with other people without being... without being scared to do that.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggests answers to four of the five basic research questions.

1. How do incestuous fathers view themselves in their sex-role?

The men in this study perceived themselves as needing to be the breadwinner in their families of procreation. Most of them perceived that the male should be the dominant figure in the household and that men in general should be strong, silent, tough and in control.

2. How do incestuous fathers satisfy their intimacy needs?

Most of the men defined intimacy as being sexual, and all of them satisfied their need for intimacy and closeness through sex.

3. What is the incestuous father's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system?

For the most part, the men perceived the relationships in their families of procreation to be very much like those in their families of origin. That
is, fathers were viewed as the dominant figure with the mother being in the complimentary role. Mothers were perceived as needing to be caring and nurturing, and the parents played an authoritarian role in their relationships with their children. In addition, when describing the relationships in their families of origin, the men reported their homes were lacking in love and affection and many of them reported experiencing physical, sexual and emotional abuse as children.

4. How was interpersonal distance regulated in the marital relationship where father-daughter incest occurred?

Every man in this study was unable to express himself effectively to his significant others. Consequently, the men reported using being angry and being sexual as their primary means of distance regulation. They said that anger served as a means of communicating power, control and the need for distance. They reported that intimacy and closeness were accomplished by being sexual.

5. In what kinds of family systems does incest occur?

While previous research has suggested a pattern of a closed family system, an emotionally distant mother,
and a parentified daughter, a strong pattern did not emerge in the present study for the men's perception of their family systems. Thus, the results were not conclusive for answering this question.

The overall pattern of the study revealed that the subjects came from backgrounds typified by their own fathers being absent or very abusive. This type of childhood environment was not conducive to their learning how to fill their roles as husbands and fathers in their families of procreation. The fact that they did not receive adequate nurturing in their childhoods suggests that they entered into their families of procreation emotionally deprived and in need of nurturing. At the same time, they perceived their role in the family as breadwinner and head of household. All of the men reported being unable to express themselves. Consequently, they were unable to communicate their needs to their family members. Thus, they reported using anger as a way of gaining control and power, and sex as a means of accomplishing intimacy and closeness.

Prior to the occurrence of the abuse, the men had typically experienced a loss (often in their male provider role) which strongly impacted their sense of self worth. Being unable to express themselves effectively, the men reported feeling very threatened
and powerless when this loss occurred. They said they used anger in an attempt to reinforce their sense of control and power. This appeared to only distance family members which, in turn reinforced their sense of powerlessness. It was then, they reported, that the incest typically occurred. This was, for some, a pathological way of attempting to regain power, and for others, a pathological attempt at intimacy and closeness. The question as to why the incest functioned to satisfy intimacy needs for some and power and control needs for others was not answered in the present study suggesting an important focus for future research.

According to Cohen (1983), the dynamics of classic incestuous families indicate that all family members are emotionally deprived. The incestuous relationship fills a basic need for warmth and nurturance and its continuation provides a defense against family disintegration. However, Cohen states that the research literature has not adequately explained how these needs become translated into incestuous behavior. The present study suggests a strong pattern of characteristics for the incestuous father and for how he contributes to the dynamics of his family system.

The findings of this study suggest that subjects' inability to express themselves effectively
significantly hampered their developing effective interpersonal relationships. This idea was substantiated by the fact that, with treatment, they learned new ways to express themselves, and consequently began relating to their significant others in such a way that they could satisfy their needs. In addition, once the men learned to communicate effectively, they reported they no longer felt powerless in their environment.

Implications

A number of studies suggest that men need to be socialized in more effective ways to meet the needs of today's society (Barbeau, 1982; Coleman, 1981; Friedland, 1982; Jones & Dembo, 1986; McGill, 1985; Stark, 1984; Toldstedt & Stokes, 1983). The present study supports these findings. All of the men in this study reported being unable to express themselves effectively, and they experienced difficulty in developing intimate relationships. It seems important to consider how our culture works against intimacy and promotes fears of dependence and self-disclosure among men.

The formulation of intimate relationships is important for psychological health and physical well
being (Jourard, 1975; Reis, et al, 1985; Talmadge & Talmadge, 1985), and verbal self-disclosure has been found to be the primary determinant for developing intimate relationships (Orlofsky, 1975; Orlofsky & Ginsburg, 1981; Toldstedt & Stokes, 1983; Waring, et al, 1981;). The traditionally sex-typed male tends to sexualize his feelings (Barbeau, 1982; McGill, 1984), whereas females and androgynous males tend to meet their expressive needs more effectively through verbal and affective self-disclosure (Coleman, 1981; Critelli, et al, 1986; Fitch & Adams, 1983; Friedland, 1982; Jones & Dembo, 1986; McGill, 1985; Prager, 1983; Schiedel & Marcia, 1985; Speisman, et al, 1985; Stephen & Harrison, 1985; Williams, 1985). The above studies imply that the traditional socialization practices in this culture are detrimental to the well-being of the sex-typical male and to the traditionally sex-typical marital relationship as well. Empirical evidence explaining gender differences in the orientation to intimacy is scarce, suggesting the need for further research in this area.

This study supports the idea that extreme male dominance often prevails in the incestuous family system (Cohen, 1983; Finkelhor, 1980; Gordon & O'Keefe, 1984; Swanson & Biaggio, 1985), suggesting the need for
power relations within the family system contribute to the occurrence of incest. Finkelhor (1986) suggests that systems theory is not adequate for examining incestuous behaviors. He even states that the fundamental solution to preventing incest lies in the resocialization of the male gender role. However, it seems necessary to consider the roles of the other family members in the phenomena of incest.

According to Conte (1986) the meaning of a behavior may be best understood when it is seen within the context of the ongoing interaction between family members. Conte suggests that one important way to understand how incest is developed and maintained within the system is to understand what function the incestuous relationship serves for every member of the family. Although the present study has moved toward answering this question by asking the incestuous father what function the incest served for him, there is a strong need for further research in this area. A qualitative study similar to the present one exploring other members' perceptions of the interpersonal relationships in the family would greatly facilitate the understanding of the incestuous family's dynamics.

Much of the research on incest has been done with small samples using clinical cases, case worker
observations, and unsubstantiated self-reports. Although these offer insights into the dynamics and consequences of incest, more rigorous methodology is needed to confirm suggestive findings. Future studies using control groups and random samplings are necessary if the goals of determining the etiology of incest and preventing its occurrence are to be accomplished.

Treatment. The results of this study suggest that therapists need to incorporate a routine history taking procedure when treating families. This would include questions regarding physical and sexual abuse in the family of origin. This can be an important tool for detecting the potential for abuse in the family of procreation. Also, when working with incestuous families, an important focus is needed on family structure. The role of the dominant father needs to be addressed. Another focus should be the strengthening of parent-child boundaries with the parents assuming mutual authority in providing guidance and protection to the children. Most importantly, family members need to learn more effective ways of communicating in order to adapt to the changing roles and rules in our society.
Limitations

Since the primary purpose of this study was to explore and describe the meanings of relationships and interaction patterns in the incestuous father's family, a comparison sample was not used. This would imply that what was discovered about the subjects may not be unique to the population of incestuous fathers. The availability of subjects was limited due to the nature of the research. Thus, randomization was not possible, suggesting that the researcher's conclusions should be limited to those men participating in the research project. Further, all of the men in the study were in treatment, because they were considered a good risk for successful reentry into the community. Those offenders considered as more serious were incarcerated. This suggests that in order to have a more representative sample of the incestuous father population, future research should be conducted including the incarcerated men. The above limitations all suggest that the incest cannot be determined to have been caused by the family dynamics identified among the men studied.
REFERENCES CITED
REFERENCES CITED


APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORMS
SUBJECT CONSENT FORM
FOR
PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

A Study of the Interpersonal Relationships in Families with Father-Daughter Incest: The Father's Perspective

You are being asked to participate in a study of the interpersonal relationships in families where father-daughter incest has occurred. It is understood that you have been identified as a father-daughter incest offender, and that you are presently involved in group therapy for this offense. The problem of sexual abuse within the family system is becoming increasingly evident to mental health professionals treating families. This research is being conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the family context in which father-daughter incest develops. The study will concentrate on the father's perspective.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to consent to an intensive interview lasting from two to three hours. The interview will focus on your perception of the interpersonal relationships in your family system.
You will also be asked questions about how you feel you relate to others in your family and how you view yourself in your family context. It is possible that you might experience some psychological discomfort from this interview process due to the sensitive nature of the questions being asked.

The interview session will be audio recorded. Your identity will be protected through the use of fictitious names or numbers, and every effort will be made to assure that your participation in this research is kept strictly confidential. However, if in the course of the interview, you provide data indicating abuse that has not previously been revealed, the investigator is required by law to report such data. Furthermore, although it is extremely unlikely, should the investigator be mandated by a court of law to reveal data obtained in the interview process, she would be legally obligated to do so.

The information obtained in this study will be used purely for the purpose of research, and it is expected to be of no benefit to you. Your refusal to participate in the study, or your wish to withdraw at any time will not in any way affect your legal status or your treatment. It is possible this research will be published in a professional journal. In the event this happens, your identity will not
be revealed. Please feel free to ask any questions needed to aid in your understanding of this project.

In the event your participation in this research directly results in your need of psychological treatment, the investigator will refer you to a psychotherapist. However, the investigator will not be financially responsible for any such treatment. Further information regarding this issue may be obtained by calling:

____________________ at ______________________

(name of researcher) (researcher's phone #)

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and I understand the inconvenience and risk of this study.

I,______________________________________, agree to participate in the research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate or that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed__________________________________

Witness___________________________________

Researcher_______________________________

Date______________________________
SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

FOR
PERMISSION TO BE CONTACTED BY INVESTIGATOR
REGARDING
PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

A Study of the Interpersonal Relationships
in Families with Father-Daughter Incest:
The Father's Perspective

________YES, I may be interested in participating in the
above research, and I would like the
investigator to contact me.

NAME:_______________________ Phone:____________

ADDRESS:__________________________

____________________

________NO, I am not interested in participating in the
study.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Basic Research Questions

1. How do incestuous fathers view themselves in their sex-role?
2. How do incestuous fathers satisfy their intimacy needs?
3. What is the incestuous father's perception of the interpersonal relationships in his family system?
4. How is interpersonal distance regulated in the marital relationship of the incestuous family?
5. In what kinds of family systems does father-daughter incest occur?

Begin interview by asking subject questions about his life right now. Follow up on his leads to establish a relaxed atmosphere and put the subject at ease:

What do you do for a living?
What do you like about your job?
What don't you like about your job?
What important changes have taken place in your life?
What are the four most important things in your life?
Who was/is in your family?
Would you tell me about your children and wife?
What concerns do you have for your children/wife?

**Sex-Role and Intimacy Needs**

How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?

What do you like most about yourself?

What do you like least about yourself?

What feelings do you have the most trouble expressing?

What kinds of things make you angry?

What do you do when you get angry?

With whom are you close?

How do you behave when you want to be close to someone?

What satisfaction do you get out of close relationships?

Describe what being intimate means to you.

How has your definition of intimacy changed?

Who would you be most likely to share with in your family--pro--ori?

What does security mean to you?

Describe what it means to you to be a man, i.e., role.

Describe what you think it means to be a woman.

Can you give me 5 words to describe feminine?

Can you give me 5 words to describe masculine?

**Marriage Relationship**

Tell me about your relationship with your wife.

Then—Now
What part was the best?
How were decisions made in the relationship?
How did you handle differences?
How did you share tasks?
When you felt like being close, how did you express it, i.e., what did you do?
How do you think your wife expressed it when she wanted to be close?
Tell me what you think makes a happy marriage.
Describe the perfect wife—husband.
How would you define love?
How would you know if a relationship is good?
What do you think caused distance—closeness in your marriage?

Incest
Describe how it happened that you decided to be sexual with your daughter.
How did you explain the relationship to yourself? Has that changed?
What did the relationship mean to you?
What kind of a relationship did you have with the other children?
Family System

Tell me what you believe is important in raising children.
How did you handle discipline in your family?
How are/were the children punished in the family?
How are/were the children rewarded?
How was/is love expressed?
How was/is anger expressed—grief—happiness?
Tell me how the household chores were handled. Who did them?
Describe a typical day in your house.
What did you do together as a family.
Describe an ideal family.

Boundaries

Did the children bring friends home with them without asking—overnight? Do they stay overnight or visit others?
If so, how often?
Were the children—parents—involved in outside activities—friends—organizations, i.e., church, clubs, etc?
Describe a good neighbor.

Family of origin

Who was in your family?
Tell me about your mother—father—their relationship.
How was discipline handled in this family?
How were the children punished?
How were the children rewarded?
What did your father do when he became angry?
Mother/children?
How was love expressed/grief/happiness?
Tell me how the household chores were handled. Who did them?
Describe a typical day in this house.
What did you do together as a family?
What was it like being a child in your family? (for you)
Complete the statement, "The one thing I missed during my childhood was..."
Do you think you are more like your mother or father?
Why?
Describe the ideal mother--father--wife--husband.
What does power mean to you?
How would you describe power in a family system?
Who would you say had the most power in your family--pro--ori?
APPENDIX C

GENOGRAM
- Put name and age of each family member (if deceased put age at time of death).
- Draw lines to indicate what the relationship was like. (see key at left)
- Write three adjectives that describe each person.
- Add siblings and your own children.
APPENDIX D

HYPOTHESES
HYPOTHESES

1. Incestuous fathers perceive themselves to be in a sex-typical role in their family system, ie., role of provider and head of family.

2. Incestuous fathers are unable to express themselves effectively to their family members.

3. Incestuous fathers use anger as a means of communicating their need for power and control and sex as a way of communicating their need for intimacy and closeness.

4. Incestuous fathers who perceive threat to their sex-typical roles, ie., loss of job or loss of position as head of household experience a sense of powerlessness.

5. Incestuous fathers who are unable to accomplish distance regulation in their families to meet their needs will commit incest as a means of attempting control and power or intimacy and closeness.