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I

CULTURAL CONTEXT

ARIÈS, de Mause, and the psychohistorians, their many divergences aside, have taught in common that the concept of childhood is one diversely construed at different times and in different places. This is no less true of child sexuality, which in this century appears to be an object of intense social reevaluation. Dawning awareness of the sexual needs and interests of children has been accompanied by alarmed revelations of sexual abuse of children, as subjects of pornography and as objects of adult erotic fixation. The purpose of these first two chapters is to establish the context for this volume and its subject matter: that neither our knowledge of child sexuality nor our alarm at its perceived subversion has any existence apart from the greater fabric of human social and scientific concern. Chapter 1 is a political and personal study of the immediate social context of these recent investigations; Chapter 2 enlarges the purview to cross-cultural proportions through the lens of anthropology.

CHILD SEXUALITY: HERE THERE BE DRAGONS

LARRY L. CONSTANTINE
FLOYD M. MARTINSON

Although the frontiers of knowledge have been steadily advanced in the field of human sexuality, the area of the sexuality of children lies mostly in that territory at the edges of our psychological maps bearing only the legend, "Here there be dragons." As their ancestors centuries ago faced the unexplored regions of the earth with terror and fascination, so today's adults seem to fear to approach issues of child sexuality and therefore are reluctant to attempt discovery of its truths.

Yet in this little-known territory of childhood are contained the core material from which our adult sexuality is formed. Our basic sexual identity as male or female; our primary erotic orientation to the same or to the opposite sex; what arouses us sexually and what turns us off; our sense of security and comfort as sexual beings; our sexual fears and preoccupations; all these and more are fixed or first established in childhood. Despite or perhaps because of this preeminence of early experiences, knowledge of child sexuality remains *terra incognita* to many adults, forbidden and even frightening.

This climate of opinion and the social context profoundly shape what can be researched, and how. The subject of exploration of child sexuality is therefore much more than a scientific matter. We may need answers to questions that are not yet permitted to be asked. Present research designs may be inadequate, yet they may be all that can now be done. Asked when he thought the type of research for which he and Virginia Johnson had become famous might be conducted with children, William H. Masters responded that it would not be in his lifetime (Johnson, 1977). The *politics* of child sexuality, as determined by the responses of individuals, organizations, and institutions to proposals for scientific study, are far more likely than scientific

matters to be the cause of continued ignorance about our sexual origins.

What is the basis for this fear and reluctance of adults to learn more about childhood sexuality? One factor may be that increased knowledge of the social and biological realities of human sexuality brings with it social change, which is threatening to many individuals. Although research and rational discourse on human sexuality are more generally accepted today than in earlier decades, when the sexual behavior of children is under consideration—particularly sexual behavior of children with adults—change of any kind can appear evil and dangerous. The media and concerned public institutions often appear to corroborate these deep-seated fears, thus maintaining a stormy climate for continued debate. From this political and social ferment, however, have emerged pioneers (and reactionaries) in the effort to better understand childhood sexuality, who are approaching *terra incognita* with determination as well as fear.

In this brief opening chapter it is our purpose to identify what we see to be some of the salient social and psychological forces that are making the scientific investigation of child sexuality a difficult, at times even courageous, undertaking. We ask why public reaction should be so vigorous, so unfavorable, and so out of proportion to the modest stimulus of a handful of researches and a scattering of opinions.

INCEST ISSUES

To recognize children as sexual beings requires the recognition of one's own children as sexual. For many people this is a sexual issue too uncomfortably "close to home," confronting parents with their own erotic reactions to their children. Although it is generally accepted in the psychotherapeutic literature that it is normal for parents to find their children sexually attractive, it is probably safe to assume that most parents do not regard incestuous attraction as normal and would not be likely to acknowledge such feelings or to permit them to enter awareness. What seems generally unappreciated is that one can acknowledge incestuous feelings, consider them to be legitimate as feelings, yet remain free to act or not act upon them in a variety of ways (Colton, 1975).

Public reactions to incest and to the incest offender suggest the potency of this attraction and its common denial. Rational faculties crumble before the conflicts engendered by incestuous feelings. Such feelings are all the more dangerous for their ubiquity; even to give voice to them is to invite chaos, to court the destruction of the family and society.

In this frightening arena, investigation becomes tantamount to advocacy; inquiry *is* incest. It is not only the untutored public that draws this conclusion. Journalists have interpreted research on the effects of incest as indicative of an active campaign to undermine the taboo and destroy the family (*Time*, 1980).

When research is conducted with biased instruments, particularly when the fundamental questions being posed are biased and self-fulfilling in themselves, the real nature of phenomena becomes inaccessible. For example, in the 1950s, extensive research was done on single-parent families—then called "fatherless families"—betraying not only a research bias concerning the proper form of the family, but also the sexism of biased custody laws and presumptions about the responsibilities of male parents and female parents. The nature of the questionnaires and rating scales used in that early research often guaranteed that negative effects would be found: they often asked what *harm*, what social and emotional *impairment*, came to children raised by only one parent. No other finding is possible when a checklist of effects or reactions contains only negatives. The full and true picture did not start to emerge until researchers began to inquire into what possible *benefits* fell to children of single parents or, better still, asked simply how children from one-parent and two-parent families might differ, if at all.

Strangely, however, the press has condemned researchers who have begun to study incest in a more scientific manner and have left room for positive reactions to an incest experience, or merely investigated differences using unbiased protocols. The research tends to be seen as part of a "campaign" (*Time*, 1980), and reaction is strongly critical; for example, "to differentiate between 'positive' and 'negative' incestuous experiences [is] mischievous, if not reprehensible" (Cisneros, 1980). Scholars, too, have seen in the raising of these questions for discussion and scientific study a "movement," a "pro-incest lobby," which is pitiable, if not contemptible (DeMott, 1980).

Intermingled with hyperbole and hysterical fears for the demise of morality, the family, and civilization, some legitimate methodological criticisms of the new incest research have been raised. It is true that much of the research, while gaining in neutrality and objectivity, suffers from sampling biases and lack of methodological sophistication. Several of the pioneering studies in this area have been the underfunded projects of researchers working somewhat outside the mainstream of the social sciences. The condemnation that so often is the public's reaction to publication of these "marginal" researchers' findings helps assure that well-designed, large-scale projects are unlikely to be funded.

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Fortunately, some highly sophisticated work has been conducted, generally under the rubric of research on sexual abuse or family violence. Interestingly, the most advanced and professional work has often been in substantial agreement with the more ad hoc efforts of the lone student or part-time social scientist.

AGE AND CLASS

Age-grading in the social structure, not the incest taboo, is the most universal feature of human societies. Every known culture distinguishes between young and old and establishes criteria for some privileges and responsibilities based on age. While it has been argued that childhood as conceived in the modern mind is a social invention of recent European origin (Ariès, 1972), as far back as written records and literature survive, some distinctions based on age have been drawn.

Age-grading is the basis for what can be regarded as one of the most fundamental and enduring of class distinctions. At all times and in all places, children have constituted a social underclass, although this distinction has been blunted somewhat by a mythical overlay of presumed innocence and special conditions for their care while young.

In contemporary times, even with the advent of permissive child-rearing models and widespread belief that ours is a child-centered society, children are, like most underclasses, denied direct access to legal and social institutions; not permitted to decide their own fates; expected to defer to the preferences and judgments of the upper class (adults); and denied specific privileges reserved for the upper class, such as self-determined bedtimes, use of social drugs, and the right of free association.

Farson (1974) has demonstrated that the special status and denial of rights accorded children, as well as the rationalizations offered in defense of the class distinction, are nearly identical to those facing minorities and women. Even the romantic mythology of childhood is similar to that regarding race and gender: children, "coloreds," and women are all depicted as naturally carefree, fortunate to be unsuited to the burdens of autonomy and decision-making, and better off protected by those in control, who are better suited by temperament and native ability to govern.

Of course, one of the privileges the adult class reserves for itself is that of sexual expression. Thus, recognition of child sexuality threatens what is probably one of the most central link-pins of hierarchical society.

Since a social underclass is often the target of frightening projective group fantasies concerning sexuality (whites have feared the sexual

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prowess of blacks, men have often found women's sexuality to be threatening and have sought to curb its unbridled expression), it is plausible that adults find sexual expression among children threatening and even dangerous. It is not clear just what suppressed adult fantasies are projected onto children. It is clear from the outcome literature that one of the most common effects of early sexual experiences is to awaken the child sexually, and that the child's eager expression of this sexuality is often severely problematic for adults (see Chapter 17).

In this regard, it is interesting to reconsider Freud's conclusion that his patients' reports of early incestuous experiences must represent, not genuine memories, but manifestations of *their* sexual desires for parents. Certainly this concept makes children appear sexually threatening to parents; given what we now know of the commonness of sexual advances toward children by parents and relatives, this interpretation by Freud could possibly qualify, at least some of the time, as adult projection.

In further support of this thesis, consider adult response to adolescent sexuality. The sexual nature of the adolescent cannot, like that of the child, be conveniently denied and countered with romanticized myths of innocence. Adult-organized social structures strive valiantly but in vain to control and limit "dangerous" adolescent sexual expression. Yet, adolescents are also the target of widespread and only thinly veiled sexual fantasies on the part of much of the adult population. Youth, not maturity, is the model for the quintessence of sexual appeal. The most common and valued media sex objects are in, or barely out of, their teens, nor is this any recent trend, for many of the great sexual romances in history and literature involved lovers who were barely teenagers. It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that such common adult fantasies and projections play some role in the public reaction to studies of child sexuality. Clarification of adult sexual investment in adolescents and children may be needed before research can proceed freely and before adults can be in a better position to help children toward healthy and fulfilling sexual adjustment.

The early global explorers, despite the forewarnings of sages and cartographers, found no dragons, nor did they fall from the edge of the world, when they ventured beyond known borders. Neither shall we, as we come to learn more of the true nature of the sexuality of our children, "fall from the edge of the world." The dragons we find, as was true in antiquity, will be the dragons of our own minds. It takes little optimism to believe that the family and civilization will survive the discovery of child sexuality. As happened to our exploring forbears, we

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can expect to be mistaken sometimes—to see coastline where there are only clouds, or to miss some great continent altogether. Nevertheless, although these explorations may challenge many and frighten some, they will slowly permit us to map out a vast unexplored region of human nature.

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2

JUVENILE SEXUALITY IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

RICHARD L. CURRIER

JUVENILE SEXUALITY AMONG THE MURIA

Beautiful Jalaro, 12 years old, slips out of her parents' thatched-roof hut, heading for the *ghotul* compound at the edge of the village. Her bare feet pad softly on the earth of the dusty village street, and her anklets jingle pleasantly in the gathering dusk. She walks with the calm, graceful sensuality for which the women of the Muria tribe are famous, but underneath her placid exterior she is brimming with excitement.

Tonight Jalaro hopes to sleep with Lakmu, her favorite of all the *ghotul* boys. Only last week, she had her first menstrual period, and now all the village boys are eager to sleep with her. She has made love to many of them during her years in the *ghotul*, but now beautiful Jalaro is a real woman at last.

At the edge of the village the other girls are waiting. They talk excitedly among themselves, fussing with their elaborate wooden hair combs, laughing and teasing about the night's activities to come. The boys are already assembled, fires have been lit, and the *ghotul* compound is filled with the scent of wood smoke and marigolds.

With a rush of noise and laughter, the girls swarm through the gate, assembling first in front of their own fire, and then dispersing to mingle with the boys. One group of boys and girls pairs off and begins

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singing sexual taunting songs. Another group settles down by the fire, talking and joking. From a third group, in a different part of the compound, there is the sudden beat of a drum, and half-naked bodies begin to bob and weave in the darkness.

Here and there, scattered like leaves, still other children lie on the ground with their heads in their arms, too tired to play after a long day of working with their parents in the fields.

Later on, when the singing and dancing have died down and the smaller children have begun to fall asleep, the Belosa (the girls' headmistress) tells each one whom she will massage and with whom she will sleep. These assignments are made arbitrarily by the headmistress, but Jalaro smiles and lowers her eyes when the Belosa, wise and fair for her 17 years, orders her to massage Lakmu and then share his sleeping mat.

Before long, Jalaro is kneeling on the ground a short distance from the fire; Lakmu sits on the ground between her thighs. She takes one of the beautiful hand-carved combs from her head and begins to comb out his long, black tangles, talking softly as she works.

When this is done, she massages his back, chest, arms, and legs—slowly at first, but building up to a violent intensity. Then she runs the teeth of her comb all over his body to stimulate the skin. Finally, she finishes by taking each of his arms in turn and cracking every joint from shoulder to fingertip.

This same scene is repeated in a great many other places throughout the compound. Soon the sleeping mats will be unrolled, and the unmarried young of the Muria, one of the non-Hindu tribal peoples of the Central Indian hill country, in hundreds of *ghotuls* scattered throughout the ancient Princely State of Bastar, will be well engrossed in the lovemaking and sexual play that Verrier Elwin (1968) once called "the best of *ghotul* games."

Safe within the protective arms of the enclosing compound walls during the hours of darkness, the children of a Muria village are entirely separated from the adults until sunrise on the next day. The adults like this arrangement because it gives them privacy in their small, crowded huts at night. And to the Muria, the enjoyment of sex—in private and without interference from children—is one of the supreme pleasures of married life.

In this technologically simple society, where privacy is all but impossible to find and where sex—like work, play, food, and sleep—is openly accepted as a normal and natural part of life, children of three or four are already familiar with the basic facts of sexual behavior. And by the time a Muria child is twice that age, sexual innocence is a thing of the past. At this point in the child's life, the parents encourage him

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or her to begin spending more and more time in the *ghotul*. Muria culture takes a generally positive view of physical and behavioral maturation, welcoming it as the flowering of a long-awaited manhood or womanhood. Muria parents are therefore anxious for their children to achieve the social and sexual sophistication that will make them desirable marriage partners in their young adulthood, and the *ghotul* is an essential training ground in this process.*

No Muria child, however, is suddenly or forcibly ejected from the parental household. Instead, the child is encouraged to participate in *ghotul* activities at the end of the day for a while, and later he or she is further encouraged to spend more and more evenings and overnights there. At daybreak, all Muria children return home for breakfast and the beginning of a day of hard work at home and in the gardens, after which the family dines together and the older children go off to the *ghotul* as before.

When they first begin spending their nights in the *ghotul*, Muria children are not immediately expected to have sexual relations, although they are exposed from the start to the extremely sophisticated conversation of the older children. As time passes, however, the neophytes find opportunities to try some of the things they have been hearing about. The less experienced are taught by the more experienced in that natural, almost effortless way children have of teaching each other things. Gradually, as the years pass, the maturing children become more confident, more experienced, and more proficient in their sexuality.

In the more conservative *ghotuls*, children maintain permanent sexual partnerships, complete with simulated "weddings" and the strict observation of sexual fidelity. But in the majority of *ghotuls* the children are arbitrarily paired off in constantly changing combinations. As a general rule, a boy and girl are not allowed to sleep together for more than three nights in a row before being required to change partners again. The Muria explain that this custom makes it almost impossible for children to form permanent emotional attachments to their sexual partners—attachments that would interfere with the carefully laid marriage plans of the older generation. (Marriage to one's *ghotul* partner was greatly frowned upon and thus quite rare.)

The constant changing of partners had other desirable effects. It insured each child a wide variety of sexual opportunities, discouraged

*The daily affairs of the *ghotul* are administered by a children's government (the office-holders are chosen by the children themselves), which sees that the *ghotul* grounds and buildings are kept clean and orderly, levies fines and punishments on those who fail to perform their allotted work or who violate *ghotul* rules, and settles disputes between *ghotul* members.

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the formation of cliques and other internal divisions, and helped to dampen competitiveness, possessiveness, and jealousy. And like many other preindustrial cultures, the Muria believe that promiscuity itself is a singularly effective contraceptive for adolescent girls. Elwin (1968:150) estimates the rate of premarital pregnancy among the Muria at 4 percent, and the near-infertility of sexually promiscuous adolescent girls has been reported throughout the Pacific, from the Philippines to Melanesia (Elwin, 1968:147; Barton, 1938; Malinowski, 1929:195), as well as in Africa and Asia.* When a *ghotul* girl did become pregnant, marriage was hastily arranged, either to her *ghotul* lover or to her legally betrothed. In either case, no permanent stigma was applied to the offspring or to the marriage itself.

The Muria regard the *ghotul* as a sacred place. It was created, according to legend, by their most revered deity (Lingo Pen), and therefore nothing that took place within its walls could be a sin. Thus the Muria child's gradual sexual initiation, in a secure, supportive, and culturally legitimized environment, has given the Muria one of the most delightful attitudes toward sex ever recorded in the annals of world ethnography.

* The Muria have a simple, innocent, and natural attitude toward sex. . . . They believe that sexual congress is a good thing; it does you good; it is healthy and beautiful; when performed by the right people . . . at the right time . . . and in the right place . . . it is the happiest and best thing in life (Elwin, 1968:97).

The traditional cultures of the West generally take the attitude that children are not naturally sexual creatures, should not be sexual creatures, and should at all costs be kept away from sexual knowledge and ideas lest they somehow become sexual creatures before their appointed hour arrives. Yet the members of relatively few cultures studied by anthropologists would have anything but derision for such notions. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of preindustrial cultures consider sex to be an inevitable and harmless aspect of childhood.

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Human cultures vary from one extreme to the other in the degree of their acceptance of sex; to highlight the differences among their myriad approaches, it is useful to divide them into four categories: repressive,

*The phenomenon of adolescent sterility, first delineated by Hartman (1931), has been well discussed in the anthropological literature (Elwin, 1968; Malinowski, 1929; Ford & Beach, 1951; Montagu, 1957). Several factors, including diet, contraceptive techniques, cultural expectations, and hereditary predisposition, seem to be involved. The evidence does not support the theory that promiscuity has any effect on fertility.

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restrictive, permissive, and supportive.* Each represents a characteristic approach to sexuality, and each has a distinctive approach to the emergent sexuality of the young.

☉ *Sexually repressive cultures* are disposed toward the *denial* of sexuality. They consider sex to be an extremely dangerous area of behavior, and they often accord special virtue to the sexually inactive. These cultures typically prohibit all forms of sex aside from that which is necessary for procreation. This requires premarital chastity and the imposition of sexual ignorance upon the young. Sexual play in childhood is strictly prohibited, generating a pronounced latency period. Adolescent and adult sexuality, such as it exists, is associated with guilt, fear, and anger. Sexual pleasure is valued little, if at all. Sexually repressive cultures are common throughout Europe but are extremely rare on other continents. The traditional rural Irish community of Inis Beag (Messenger, 1971) provides one excellent example; the Cheyenne (Hoebel, 1960), buffalo hunters of the North American plains, is another.

☉ *Sexually restrictive cultures* are disposed toward the *limitation* of sexuality. Sexual play in childhood is strongly discouraged, and the sexes may be segregated early in life. Premarital chastity is required of at least one of the sexes, although some sexual license is generally granted to the other sex. While juvenile celibacy may be terminated at puberty for one of the sexes by a formal puberty ceremony, the continuing celibacy of the other sex leaves little opportunity for normal heterosexual behavior in adolescence. Sexual pleasure is typically valued more by the sex that was given more sexual freedom in early life. In general, these cultures are ambivalent about sex: they pursue it, but not without reservation. Sex tends to be feared, not as much in itself as for the problems it can cause. Sexually restrictive cultures are common throughout the world. Although they are a minority among primitive cultures, they are the dominant type among civilizations. The Mexican peasant village of Tepoztlán (Lewis, 1951) provides one example; the Dani (Heider, 1976), primitive agriculturalists of the New Guinea highlands, provide another.

☉ *Sexually permissive cultures* are disposed toward the *tolerance* of sexuality. While formal prohibitions exist, they are only loosely enforced and are often more honored in the breach than in the observance. Sexual play in childhood may be technically forbidden, but as long as it is kept out of sight adults maintain a public pretext that they do not know what is going on. Adolescents of both sexes are usually allowed considerable sexual latitude, and premarital sex is considered normal.

*I have proposed a new set of categories for sexual culture because Ford and Beach's (1951) categories do not make clear the essential differences among possible sexual strategies. I would also maintain that my labelling is more appropriate.

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Sexual latency in childhood is either weak and short-lived or is missing altogether. Sexually permissive cultures concern themselves far more with the question of whether a given sexual behavior is appropriate than with the question of whether sexual behavior itself is actually taking place. Sexual pleasure is valued by both sexes, and sex is considered a normal, natural, and inevitable part of human life. Sexually permissive cultures are found on every continent; they are rare in Europe, but they are common in the equatorial latitudes of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Semai (Dentan, 1968), aboriginal inhabitants of the Malay jungles, are an ideal example of this type.

Sexually supportive cultures are disposed toward the *cultivation* of sexuality. Sex is considered indispensable to human happiness, and early sexual experience is seen as a necessary part of proper social and biological maturation. A complex of customs and institutions, validated by traditional beliefs, provides *both sexual information and sexual opportunity* to young people of all ages who are being encouraged, especially by the parental generation, to develop their sexual skills. There is no period of sexual latency in childhood. Special dwellings or meeting-places may be designated legitimate social arenas for juvenile and (especially) adolescent sexual activity, and puberty ceremonies may include formal sexual instruction (Marshall, 1971). Supportive societies may or may not be tolerant of homosexual relationships, but in either case sexual pleasure is both highly valued and positively demanded by both sexes. The lack of sexual gratification is considered intolerable, and it is sufficient grounds for terminating any sexual relationship, including marriage. Sexually supportive cultures are common in equatorial Africa, Southern Asia, and (especially) Oceania. (Old Polynesia, where this approach predominated, earned a well-deserved reputation among world travellers for the abundance of its sexual gratifications.) The Muria (Elwin, 1968) and the Trobrianders (Malinowski, 1929), inhabitants of a group of coral islands in the South Pacific, furnish classic examples of this type.

As cultures change over time, their approach to sexuality may change as well, and nowhere has this been demonstrated as graphically as in the recent history of western culture. With few exceptions, traditional European cultures were either repressive or restrictive, and Victorian England, the mother of tradition for most of the English-speaking world, had evolved one of the most sexually repressed cultures in the history of civilization. Even so, western society made a successful transition from a repressive to a restrictive sexual culture between 1900 and 1950—a rather short period of time in the history of cultures.

At present, the modern world is in the throes of yet another transi-

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tion: the old restrictive rules are softening, bending, and in some cases being extinguished by a tide of sexual permission that made its presence felt, and its mass appeal undeniable, in America in the 1960s. The changes wrought by the "sexual revolution" were real enough: the 1970s witnessed an explosive increase in adolescent pregnancies, providing hard evidence that adolescent sexuality had become greatly intensified. Nor does this intensification show any clear sign of abating. Americans born after the early 1960s thus represent the first American generation for whom the psychological release from juvenile celibacy occurred at puberty, rather than several years later, and it seems almost certain that this generation's attitude toward sex will consequently be quite different from that of its parents and grandparents. There is a distinct possibility that this generation will raise its own offspring in an atmosphere of genuine sexual permission. If it does, America's ultimate transition to a sexually permissive society will become all but inevitable.

JUVENILE SEXUALITY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

The post-Victorian search for marital happiness gave rise to a romantic mythology about the ideal marriage, in which sex would be exciting and freely available. The ethnographic data, however, do not justify this romantic expectation. Sexually restrictive cultures are ambivalent about sex, regard it as a problem area, and do not consider it one of life's most important sources of pleasure and gratification. In fact, the romantic ideal of sexual happiness in marriage probably cannot be achieved by a sexually restrictive society. The mythology, however, flourishes as never before.

Everyone wants a spouse who is sexually proficient, but no one wants a child who is learning *how* to be sexually proficient. Such are the cultural contradictions of which personal tragedies are made. Perhaps the continuing sorrow of the sexually disappointed will fuel a final push toward a sexually supportive modern culture, in which customs and institutions arise to provide the immature members of society with sexual information, opportunity, and permission: these are the essential ingredients for vigorous sexual development. If this ultimate sexual revolution does take place in modern society, will it solve the problem of sexual dissatisfaction in marriage, one of the foremost causes of divorce in America today?*

Verrier Elwin spent most of his life among the Muria and other Gond-speaking tribes of Central India, ultimately taking the daughter

*Pietropinto & Simenauer (1979:88) describe a study by the American Association of Marriage Counselors in which sexual problems were the *primary* cause of marital instability for 20 percent of unhappily married women and 40 percent of unhappily married men.

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of a village headman as his wife. He studied scores of villages and thousands of individuals, and he published 17 volumes of ethnographic data. On the basis of this research, Elwin concluded that the Muria had achieved in real life the romantic myth that western society was reaching for but could not seem to grasp: stable, monogamous marriages, in which fidelity was observed and sexual fulfillment was virtually guaranteed. The sexual training every Muria man and woman had received in the *ghotul*, said Elwin, was the single factor responsible for their enviable marriages.

The Muria have a divorce rate of 3 percent. The divorce rate in America was 8 percent in 1900 and had risen to 50 percent by 1975. The extraordinarily low Muria divorce rate cannot be explained as the result of social pressure, because in Muria culture divorce is considered neither sinful nor shameful; it is simply regarded as unfortunate. And in other semitribal societies of India, where there are no institutions comparable to the *ghotul*, divorce rates range as high as 46 percent (Elwin, 1942). If we were to adopt a modern version of the *ghotul*, would our divorce rate plummet accordingly?

Considerable practice and encouragement is needed if a complex skill is to be mastered, and for this reason the members of sexually supportive cultures have the knowledge, interest, and ability needed to create sexual pleasure in copious amounts with the cooperation of a willing and equally knowledgeable partner. This may be a good recipe for sexual satisfaction in marriage; but it is no guarantee of marital satisfaction in general. The Muria are, unfortunately, a special case: sexually permissive and supportive societies do not always enjoy stable or happy marriages. Indeed, when the expectation of sexual gratification is high, as it inevitably will be in a sexually supportive society, any substantial loss of sexual interest or compatibility will itself be a serious threat to marital stability.

There is little reason to expect that the sexual training of juveniles and adolescents will stop the divorce epidemic. At most, such training would simply remove one of several major factors that produce marital dissatisfaction in our society at this time. The key variable affecting marital satisfaction is the nature of the cultural expectations and the degree to which those expectations are fulfilled in real-life situations. Our society suffers most, I believe, from the contradiction between its romantic expectations of sexual fulfillment in marriage on the one hand and its restrictive approach to sexual development—which makes those expectations almost impossible to fulfill—on the other.

At the same time, it is essential to point out that premarital sex, including juvenile experimentation and adolescent promiscuity, is not at all incompatible with stability, sexual fidelity, and emotional satisfac-

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tion in marriage. Muria marriages succeed because *all* the institutions of Muria society—social, economic, and religious, as well as sexual—work in concert to support the traditional ideal of marital satisfaction. The same cannot be said of western society at the present time; indeed, it would be unfair to expect sex alone to provide enough bonding power to hold together an institution that is coming apart at the seams *precisely* for lack of social, economic, and religious support from society at large.

SYNTHESIS

The importance of sexual experience in childhood and (especially) adolescence cannot be underestimated, if a vigorous sex life is to be enjoyed in adulthood. This point was stressed 30 years ago by Ford and Beach (1951:195), and it has been made again and again by anthropologists studying the ethnography of sexual behavior.

It is noteworthy that sexual development seems to follow similar patterns throughout a wide range of permissive and supportive societies; when American Indians, equatorial Africans, Asiatic Indians, Malaysians, Melanesians, Polynesians, and many other racial and ethnic groups all display roughly the same pattern of development, one begins to suspect the existence of an underlying biological program governing sexual development in *Homo sapiens sapiens*. The broad outlines of this developmental pattern are as follows.

- * **INFANCY.** Sexual stimulation of infants of both sexes is a common form of parental pacification. (For some reason, such stimulation, whether manual or oral, seems much more common between mothers and male infants than in the three other possible parent-child combinations.) Infants are encouraged to stimulate themselves manually.
- * **EARLY CHILDHOOD.** Young juveniles become more proficient at autoeroticism, and they may gather in groups for autoerotic happenings. These soon lead to sexual exploration and experimentation of a general kind, both heterosexual and homosexual.
- * **LATE CHILDHOOD.** Older juveniles begin losing interest in autoerotic and homosexual gratifications as their sexual identities become more strongly developed. They engage in heterosexual role modeling of all kinds, including repeated attempts at intercourse. Girls of this age may begin having regular intercourse with older boys; boys of this age are still generally unable to perform the full complement of behaviors involved in normal copulation.

* PUBERTY. Girls begin a phase of sexual intensification which often involves a period of competitive promiscuity. It is during this period that basic sexual techniques are first mastered; by the end of puberty the transition to adult sexual behavior is complete. Boys also learn basic sexual techniques, but as most of their sexual interactions are with younger girls, the learning process is not nearly so rapid or complete. Both sexes have generally abandoned autoerotic and homosexual behaviors, which they have come to regard as immature.

* ADOLESCENCE. Both sexes seek wide sexual experience in adolescence as part of their preparation for adulthood. Adolescent girls may have relationships with adult men of all ages as well as with their male peers, and adolescent boys may similarly range throughout the female age pyramid in their search for sexual variety and excitement. But the passions of promiscuity are, year by year, replaced by the more substantial gratifications of permanent mating, and by late adolescence most females are legally and emotionally ready for marriage. Males may, in some societies, choose marriage partners at this time, but here economic considerations begin to play a major role, and marriage may be deferred while a male devotes his young manhood to the accumulation of sufficient wealth and property to discharge his responsibilities as a husband. Thus he may be slower to give up the pattern of adolescent promiscuity.

Thus, sexual freedom in childhood and adolescence leads, like all other viable cultural pathways, to marriage, procreation, and economic achievement. Those who assert that the relaxation of sexual restrictions on the young will undermine the foundations of society are simply ignorant of the ethnographic facts of life.

◆ Our species exhibits the most powerful sex drive and the most indefatigable sexual capacity of any animal species on earth. Whether it is repressed, restricted, permitted, or supported, the existence of important sexual needs in childhood and adolescence cannot reasonably be denied. In the years to come, the biomedical evidence of the linkage between early sexual experience and adult sexual adjustment will accumulate, as surely as the fossils of prehistoric life forms have accumulated in the past 100 years.

In the evolution of cultures, as in the evolution of organisms, a chance combination of factors may lead to an evolutionary blind alley. The quest for the post-Victorian romantic family is just such a cul-de-sac. If it is to be escaped, our culture will have to evolve in one of two directions: either backward into the moral certainties of repression and restriction or forward into the uncharted seas of sexual permission.

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II

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND DEVELOPMENT

THIS section examines normal sexual behavior in infancy and childhood. Chapters 3 and 4 explore central questions about prepubertal development of sexual capacity and behavior. Martinson documents the early appearance in children of sexual capacities comparable to adult capacities. Basing his presentation on modern structuralist views, Martinson contends that these similar affectional-erotic capacities differ only in that they are experienced and interpreted differently by adults and children because of the differences in stages of cognitive development. Langfeldt also establishes connections between sexuality in children and adults, but he views human sexual development as gradual and continuous, not as having the clear-cut stages and abrupt transitions described by many observers and theorists. In Chapter 5, direct observations of children's sexual activity by preschool teachers are reported by Gunderson and colleagues; these observations provide a preliminary detailed account of the sociosexual behavior of very young children. Chapter 6 continues this investigation of the social components of children's sexual behavior with an analysis by Langfeldt of sex differences and social components in the dynamics of childhood masturbation.

3

EROTICISM IN INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

FLOYD M. MARTINSON

A number of scholars wrote about infant and child sexuality before and around the turn of the century (Kern, 1973), and Freud's rich insights on the matter were first published in 1905 (S. Freud, 1964). One might expect, therefore, that a good deal of research on the nature and expression of sexuality in the normal (modal) infant and child would have followed this early intellectual stimulation, not least in the social sciences. However, this has not happened since the attention of investigators in the behavioral sciences has focused instead on sexual characteristics and sexual behavior of adolescents and adults. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss what we do know about sexuality in the normal child and what our responses are to what we know. (For more detailed discussion of these issues, see Martinson, 1973, and Martinson, 1980.)

FETAL AND INFANT SEXUAL CAPACITY

Some important concepts have been formulated and empirical research has been done in the area of child sexuality in the 75 years since Freud's first essay. Infantile (and even prenatal) sensual behavior has been documented (Kinsey et al., 1948, 1953; Liley, 1972; Martinson, 1973); it is now known, for example, that fetuses sometimes suck their thumbs, fingers, and toes, and that male babies are capable from birth of penile erections, and female babies of vaginal lubrication.

Revised from an article with the same title in *The Journal of Sex Research* 12:251-262, 1976. Reprinted with permission of the author and publisher.

But these earliest childhood manifestations of physiological sexual-erotic capacity should not be considered as firm evidence of a sexual capacity much like that of adults. Rather than simply thinking of infantile sexual capacity as comparable to the adult's, perhaps the best approach to understanding early sexual manifestations is to begin by conceptualizing infantile sexuality under some more general conceptual rubric, such as the pleasure-pain principle.

Until recently, the fetus in situ was inaccessible to study. Far from being an "inert passenger in a pregnant mother" (Liley, 1972), the fetus is now regarded as very much in command of the pregnancy. Much activity can be observed in utero; the fetus moves its limbs and trunk at least from the eighth week of gestation. (Fetal movement is now known to be crucial for the proper development of bones and joints.) The fetus is also responsive to pressure, touch, and noise. We have known for some time that tickling the fetal scalp, stroking the palm, or making loud noises in its vicinity provokes response and movement (Langworthy, 1933). The fetus is experienced in swallowing and in many cases in sucking as well.

On the other hand, to speak of infant and child sexuality as only general pleasure seeking and pain avoidance is not adequate, for infants and children have the capacity for more intense and spasmodic sexual response at the physiological-reflexive level. With infants as well as with adults, we must entertain not just a pleasure-pain principle but also a principle of orgasmic capacity. It seems quite safe to assert that the human child prior to puberty is capable of engaging in the same range of physiological sexual activities as the adult is capable of—a principle of general physical sexual-erotic capacity in children (Kinsey, 1948, 1953). We believe this to be only a physiological capacity at this age, however, for the child lacks some of the fantasy content and the power and discipline of concentration available to adults. A young child is capable of fantasizing, but the extent of experience and therefore the richness of recall is limited (Martinson, 1973). Hence, even the sexually experienced child may not be capable of stimulating itself to the same heights of expectation and satisfaction as an adult can achieve.

DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S HOMOEROTIC AWARENESS

At what age, then, can it be said that a child becomes conscious of erotic desire and erotic pleasure, reflects on it, and seeks it from its own body and in intimate association with others? In other words, when does sexual awakening take place? In romantic literature, as well as in common parlance, sexual awakening is commonly represented as occurring concurrent with or subsequent to the onset of puberty—with

the first "crush," the first embrace, the first kiss, or the first coitus. Films with titles such as *Her First Summer* and *Summer of '42* are examples of the popular concepts of adolescent sexual awakening. But pubertal or postpubertal sexual awakening is only one kind of awakening, and probably is not the first sexual awakening for any but the least experienced and most naive child.

Sexual experience is of two kinds, reflexive and eroticized. Eroticized sexuality refers to sexual experience that one is conscious of and involved in. Prenatal thumbsucking generally should be labeled as reflexive, but considered as conditioned-reflexive behavior if it is behavior that is repeated and more than accidental in occurrence. In other words, the fetus may well be capable of sensate learning at a primitive level (Liley, 1972). This behavior could be labeled as a type of sexual awakening, but I prefer to reserve the term *awakening* for behavior involving self-awareness, and self-awareness is not a prenatal faculty.

• Genital play of a volitional nature, so as to be labeled masturbation, has been observed as early as the first year of life. Kinsey (1953) reported one case of a 7-month-old infant and five infants under 12 months old who were observed to masturbate. There are adults who can recall having discovered masturbation and the pleasure associated with it beginning as early as the second or third year of life. The following example is not atypical:

* The first time I recall having a sexually pleasing sensation was when I was around 3 or 4. I remember feeling very proud of what I had learned and the strange sensation it aroused (Martinson, 1973:25).

Any child, certainly by the age of 5, is capable of being autoerotically awake and capable of autoerotic experience, including self-stimulation to the point of orgasm. Kinsey estimated that more than half of all boys could achieve orgasm at age 3 to 4, and almost all boys could do so three to five years before reaching puberty. (Data on girls are not adequate to make such an estimate.) The 5-year-old's capacity would include the capacity for somatosensory response to external stimulation (prenatal), sensate habituation or learning (prenatal), thumbsucking (prenatal), erection or vaginal lubrication (first year of life), masturbation (first to third year), and the capacity to fantasize (second to third year).

DEVELOPMENT OF DYADIC SEXUAL RESPONSIVENESS IN CHILDREN

Let us now turn to other-erotic or sociosexual erotic awakening—that is, sexual awakening in an encounter with another person. When does this capacity manifest itself?

The experience of sensate encounters between an infant and another person predates the onset of conscious awareness (Martinson, 1973, 1980). Therefore, the earliest physical encounters cannot be considered interpersonal, since encounters are not truly interpersonal until both participants have acquired some awareness of self as subject and the other as object. If this were not the case, it would be possible for the birth experience itself to be treated as an interpersonal erotic encounter. We do not know the reasons why, but boy babies, for example, are sometimes born having penile erections. Is it due to the stress and pain accompanying birth? Is it due to a pleasurable sensate experience? Some mothers have also reported that giving birth was a sexually stimulating experience (Ziegler and Rodgers, 1968), a personally stimulating experience but not an interpersonal one given the infant's lack of self-awareness.

The sucking experience at the mother's breast has all the ingredients for a sexually rewarding physiological experience for both mother and infant. And infants do sometimes show body tension and release in nursing similar to that seen in sexual-erotic experience (Newton and Newton, 1967). Mothers sometimes report the nursing experience as sexually stimulating for themselves. But once again, the infant is too young to be consciously aware of the encounter, and therefore no sociosexual erotic awakening can be said to occur. Furthermore, many babies have a very truncated nursing experience at best. Perhaps no more than one-third of mothers in the U.S. nurse their babies, and one-fourth of these nurse the baby for less than one month. Subsequent sustained intimate encounters are apt to be incidental, episodic, and accidental in a sexually restrictive society (Martinson, 1973). Systematic observation of infant and early childhood sexual behavior has been limited, and direct experimentation with the sexual capacity of the young has been furtive and almost nonexistent. Most of our data on infant and child sociosexual encounters are based on the recall of episodic encounters dating back to the age of first recall.

Given the restrictions on the possibility of gathering empirical evidence, what can we say about the age and nature of sociosexual awakening in childhood? Even with limited and anecdotal evidence, we can say that sociosexual, or self-other, sexual awakening need not wait for the hormonal and social changes that come at puberty (Martinson, 1978). Just a few cases of recall illustrate, if they do not convincingly support, this assertion. (Only the first case is reported by the parent and is, therefore, not a case of recall.)

Dianna (age 2 1/2): "Daddy, would you kiss my clitoris?" Casually, Daddy says, "Sure." Bends over and gives her a light smack. Dianna:

"No, do it long like you do to Mommy." The father reports he thought briefly about it and decided there was no harm in it. Dianna enjoyed it and later asked for a repeat performance.

In first grade, I can remember my first actual erection. I was sitting on my teacher's lap. . . .

The girl and I were 6. . . . I suggested playing doctor. . . . She messed around a little bit until I began to get what was for me my first memorable erection. . . . I wasn't exactly prepared for the sensation I received so I suggested that maybe she shouldn't do that any more. I seem to remember a strange feeling when looking at her genitals. . . . I felt a pleasurable sensation.

I do remember having erections when I was 7 or 8 years old. All I really noticed about them was that they occurred when I thought about a young girl I felt romantically inclined toward. Also, they made it very difficult to roll over in bed. I never knew the purpose of the arousal, but I was aroused.

A girl: When I was about 7 years old, my 11-year-old neighbor girl friend and I would get together and play games which involved fondling and exploring each other's body. . . . it did not involve taking off the clothes, just placing the hand inside the clothing. By sexual contacts I had a release to strange feelings inside of me and got much physical satisfaction when arms were holding me.

A preadolescent boy: My awakening came one day when my girl cousin, who was four years older than I, and I were wrestling on the couch. She was in control. . . . Suddenly she started showering kisses on my face. I protested with shouting and vows that I wasn't going to stand for this situation any longer. She calmly said to be quiet or that our parents would hear. This continued for about five or ten minutes and I found my aversions to being kissed gradually declining. We kissed with mutual consent for perhaps five or six times, with each kiss lasting about ten seconds. During the remainder of her visit, I avoided her. I would have liked to go back to the couch and her, but I was afraid to do it. . . . I realized from that time on that I could never interact with a girl by treating her like a boy again. . . . It was the first sexual encounter in which I was consciously aware of being a participant and having sexual feelings. . . . Our later meetings were friendly, but the times when we would engage in rough play together were gone forever (Martinson, 1973).

These examples indicate that the capacity to relate to another person in an erotically intimate way and to experience sexual feelings and satisfactions (either homosexually or heterosexually) is present before puberty. And this statement is conservative, for most of the capacity and many of the experiences are present by age 5 (Broderick and Fowler,

1961), even in this society that is restrictive of infant and child sexual behavior. It appears reasonable to assume that the child old enough to be aware of himself will awaken sexually in relation to another person as early as and to the extent that the opportunity to experience and learn is given or encouraged.

The opportunity to learn and to experience the pleasures of sex is not provided many children in sexually restrictive societies. Sears et al. (1957), in tabulating mothers' reported evaluations of their own reactions to sex play of their children, found that only 2 percent of the mothers rated themselves as "entirely permissive." If our society were permissive, the tabulation would no doubt have included another category, namely, "Actively support and encourage child's sexual development and experience." Since no such category was included, it apparently was assumed that no mother in the sample of nearly 400 would categorize herself in this way.

SEXUAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND RESEARCH

Can it be asserted that the average 5-year-old or the average preadolescent possesses the capacity of comprehension necessary to experience the intricacies, the nuances, the mutuality, the empathy, the heights of delight, and the depths of despair of an adult sexual relationship? We can say that the average preadolescent and surely the average 5-year-old does not and perhaps could not experience the sexual encounters available to adults. In addressing this question we need to consider something of the available theory and research on child development.

Child development research has most commonly followed a strategy of isolating for measurement some presumed developable behavior or behavior disposition (such as dependency or aggression), and then attempting to discover what brought it about (the antecedent variables), either in the experimental situation itself or, more commonly, in the child's present or past life situation, of which the manifested behavior is a consequence or function (Flavell, 1963). In other words, the capacity to manifest the behavior is assumed; the researcher is interested in discovering what experiences caused it to manifest itself at that time and the reasons why the behavior or behavior disposition is currently stronger in one child than in another. This has been labeled the *antecedent-consequent* research strategy (Flavell, 1963). There have been very few studies where sexual-erotic capacity was the presumed developable behavior or disposition (see Broderick and Fowler, 1961; Martinson, 1973, and Martinson, 1974). Yet what I have said until now

about autoerotic and sociosexual awakening essentially follows such a theoretical and research strategy—namely, that the capacity is present but the experience is lacking.

A second theoretical and research strategy follows a *developmental-descriptive* strategy (Flavell, 1963). This approach does not assume a developable capacity but seeks to find out what capacity develops with chronological age and at what chronological age, and if possible to seek out the sequential stages in its development. One finds the threads of a developmental-descriptive approach in a variety of theoretical formulations in the field of child development. It plays a part in Freud's concepts of oral, anal, and phallic stages and in Erikson's (1963) eight psychosocial stages of ego development. Recently Gagnon and Simon (1973) have cautioned against assuming a "too simple and excessively linear notion of sexual development." They assert that age and not just experience is essential to sexual awakening and development, and that to presume a powerful psychosexual drive as a fixed biological capacity only waiting to be put to use may prove to be a major obstacle to an understanding of psychosexual development (Gagnon and Simon, 1973). This reaffirms an idea that has been present in the folk wisdom: the recognition of marked psychosexual capacities that develop at a certain physiological age, the age of puberty.

The critical-period hypothesis utilized by Lorenz (1952), Money, and others, and Money's principle (1963) of sequential differentiation, addition, and masculine vulnerability, and his androgen-libido principle all recognize the development of capacities by stages. However, Piaget is perhaps the prime exemplar of the developmental-descriptive approach as it applies to children and preadolescents, and in the following paragraphs I will focus attention on Piaget's theory, some subsequent research, and their implications.

• Piaget's theory strongly suggests that the average 5-year-old child and perhaps even the preadolescent child is incapable of sexual performance comparable to that of an adult even if given the opportunity for sexual experience. According to Piaget, the cognitive equipment for such childhood experience is lacking (Piaget, 1929; Flavell, 1963). He asserts that every instruction (or experience offered) from outside the child presupposes a construction within the child that is ready to receive the instruction. Therefore a child cannot be influenced by certain classes of stimuli in the way in which they are intended, for the child lacks the internal wherewithal to assimilate them. For Piaget, the essential impetus for complete cognitive activity lies within the cognitive apparatus itself, inside the person, but it is not present in its fully developed form until adolescence or later.

To say that a cognitive schema has been structured within the per-

son is tantamount to saying that it will function, according to Piaget. It will assimilate anything in its environment to which it can accommodate its structure, for Piaget's is an equilibrium model of development. Piaget's model suggests that in the area of child sexuality, it does little good or no good to offer to the child sexual instruction or experience that his cognitive structure cannot assimilate. On the other hand, and of equal importance, the child will assimilate what is available from his environment at the time the appropriate cognitive structure is prepared to function, regardless of the quality of the experience offered. By preadolescence, for example, the child may unconsciously or consciously feel a great need for certain kinds of sexual knowledge, whether any is forthcoming or not. Consider the young man who, for instance, recalls his own sexual awakening:

Just before puberty I had a hunger for knowledge. I read all the sex literature that I could get my hands on (Martinson, 1973).

Is there empirical evidence in the field of child sexual-erotic development that supports Piaget's contention? Not very much. But that again may be a fault of the difficulty of the research and the lack of effort rather than the fault of the theory. Let me offer several small bits of evidence and one study in support of Piagetian theory.

In Scandinavia, where sex education is strongly supported and provided from a young age, Hoffmeyer (1970), a Danish psychiatrist and sex educator, observes that cognitive sex education given to children at a very young age is not successful. Young children tend to "forget" what has been told them and are equally surprised each time they are told. Anna Freud, in reviewing sex education measures that have been employed with young children (1944), observes that smart children cannot accept even the most well-meant and plainly formulated sex information.*

More directly to the point, however, is a study of child sexual learning utilizing Piaget's theory as the basis for hypotheses. The study

*Taken at face value, these data can also be given an alternative interpretation: that they are not evidence of stage-wise sexual-erotic development, but rather an indictment of the method employed to impart the knowledge—that is, abstract cognitive explanation. It is also fully compatible with structuralist models to argue that it is the mode of transmission, not the information itself, that is incompatible with the child's capacities. The anthropological evidence cited in Chapter 2 and elsewhere in this volume suggests that, given concrete experiential introductions to sexuality, children successfully assimilate complex data at early ages. However, it should be noted that such tangible and tactile introduction is more closely allied to knowledge of sexuality than of reproduction. Conception, pregnancy, and birth are, of necessity, more abstract and remote from the young child's immediate experience than are, for example, masturbation and sexual pleasure. The latter sensual aspects are, of course, the ones omitted from most sex education in favor of the former, more intellectual, matters.—CONSTANTINE

(Bernstein and Cowan, 1975) deals with children's knowledge of how people get babies. Piaget suggested nearly fifty years ago that children's comprehension of the cause of babies should follow the same sequence of cognitive developmental stages (preoperational, concrete operations, formal operations) as does their comprehension of physical causality.

Bernstein and Cowan recorded the comprehension of 60 children at three age levels—three to four, seven to eight, and 11 to 12—and found support for Piaget's theory. The children's concepts of how people get babies appeared to follow a Piagetian developmental sequence. There was a consistent increase in stage scores with increasing age, with older children operating at consistently higher conceptual levels. Children attained concrete observations first. Most three to four-year-olds believed that a baby had always existed, though they had several different notions concerning how it came to be in the mother's body. With the advent of concrete operations, children coordinated the variables in a system of physical causes but failed to come to grips with genetic transmission. Only the older children could provide a reasonably sophisticated theory of how people get babies. The origin of babies appeared to be a relatively difficult concept for children to comprehend. This study would appear to suggest that sex information is not simply taken in by the child; it is assimilated (transformed) to the child's present cognitive level.*

Piagetian theory shifts the focus to the child's cognitive structure and its readiness to receive instruction and away from the prevailing view, which assumes that changes in children's concepts of procreation are functions of what they themselves observe; of peer and adult information and misinformation; and of physiological growth related to libidinal or sexual functioning.

What then of praxis? Is it not the task of sexologists to try to pinpoint the age-phases at which the child's cognitive structure is ready to receive and assimilate instruction in sexuality? Yet to emphasize

*Earlier criticism of Anna Freud's study applies here also: knowledge of where babies come from is concerned with human reproduction, not childhood sexuality. All such structuralist studies suffer from a common set of shortcomings in confusing performance with potential and in interpreting as functions of the child's cognitive structure what may be mere reflections of the child's culture. The fact that typical American 3- to 4-year-olds do not know how conception and gestation take place does not mean they cannot know. Given the infrequent, inadequate, often evasive explanations offered most children in Western society, it is not surprising that it takes many years for them to get the story straight. On the other hand, I have known 5-year-olds who understood intercourse and orgasm, who could give creditable (though idiosyncratic) explanations of fertilization and gestation, and who knew about childbirth in detail. But such children were growing up in exceptional families where sexuality was very much in the open and sexual matters were freely discussed.—CONSTANTINE

cognitive structure readiness is to deal only with the more "cold-blooded" aspects of cognition" (Flavell, 1963). It does not account for the passionate, affect-laden aspects of sexual learning.

✓ Piaget in a way recognized this in the concept of *décalage*. He posits developmental lags in the application of a child's cognitive structure in particular content areas (Bernstein and Cowan, 1975). Piaget recognizes not only that the difficulty of the task, but also that the child's previous experiences, and the role of affect, may contribute to the developmental lags. In fact, in Piaget's "cold-blooded cognition" theory, affect is seen as an intrusion factor promoting lower levels of performance in a particular area than would otherwise have been the case. The sexual experiences that the average child will have in a sexually restrictive society will of necessity be furtive, accidental, and isolated. It is little wonder that adults, when retrospective about their childhood sexual encounters, show negative affect, using more negative than positive terms to characterize their experiences (Martinson, 1973). Such words as *embarrassed, miserable, awkward, irritated, uncomfortable, afraid, confused, disturbed, distrustful, ashamed, depressed, repulsed, frustrated, and guilty* are more often heard than words like *excited, proud, enjoyable, warm and comfortable, uninhibited, beautiful, accepted* (Martinson, 1973).

THE FUTURE OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL SOCIALIZATION

Where are we as far as sexual socialization or sex education is concerned, both in regard to sensate pleasuring and cognitive sex education? We could dismiss the question by stating that our knowledge of child sexuality based on theory and research does not provide us with the necessary supporting evidence for praxis. This may be true, but it will not do. Piaget is no doubt correct in asserting that, when the cognitive structure is ready, learning of some kind will take place whether we provide input or not. The capacity for sensate pleasuring develops very early in life, even prenatally, and too early to be a concern of the school's sex education program. As long as children are reared in families, the child's sensate learning will take place primarily in the home. We can feel quite safe in asserting that most parents today, certainly in the United States, do not feel comfortable with the idea that they should contribute to the child's sexual-erotic learning. A few social scientists, based on convictions growing out of their research, are encouraging parents not only to be permissive but to support and actively cooperate in the erotic experiences of the child.* These research-

*The neuropsychologist James Prescott, who is actively engaged in researching somatosensory development and its consequences for persons as well as for societies, is a case in point (Prescott, 1975). Prescott is convinced that the deprivation of physical sensory pleasure is the principal root cause of violence.

ers report some evidence of increased parental relaxation of sexual restrictiveness, but little evidence of active support of the child's sexual-erotic development (Martinson, 1973; Lindahl, 1973). Given American society as it is today and in spite of some exceptions (Yates, 1978), it is too much to expect that optimum sexual socialization at the sensate-pleasuring level will take place for most children in the foreseeable future.

Regarding cognitive sex education as a part of the school curriculum, on the other hand, we need to recognize more fully the child's cognitive readiness to receive sexual information at different ages. We need also to deal with the *décalage*. For many years we have lived with the delusion that given good sex education and the availability of contraceptives we would have gone a long way toward solving the problem of unplanned, unwanted pregnancies among teenagers. Now we have come to realize that teenagers who have the benefit of the best sex education we can offer and availability of contraceptives still do not always make rational use of contraception (Chilman, 1978; Martinson, 1974). We are coming now to realize that even at adolescence the individual may not be ready, either cognitively or emotionally, to accept his sexuality to a degree that allows for premeditated sex (Cvetkovich, et al., 1975). It appears that a necessary component of rational premeditated sex is that the adolescent be well on the way to developing an identity of his own, separate from that of his parents. The child's understanding of how people get babies is in one way similar to the adolescent's ability to apply formal operational thinking to his own sexuality: there appears to be a *décalage*. We need to take seriously these developmental lags in sexual learning in both childhood and in adolescence, lags that may be due to negative affective experiences resulting from earlier sexual experiences or to lack of sexual experience in a restrictive home and community. I speak here not of physically and emotionally battered children—they are a special category—but rather of the experiences of a "normal" child growing up in an average restrictive home. Adolescents and young adults recalling encounters with parents over childhood sex play commonly remember the parent (and usually the mother because of her primary child-care role) as mildly to excessively negative toward their sexual behavior (Martinson, 1973, 1974). It is common to have received negative response from mother coupled with unambiguous and never-countermanded instructions such as, "That's terrible, don't let me ever catch you doing that again!" Sex educators must be prepared to deal with negative experiences of the child, to recognize them openly, and to air them and evaluate them in discussions with the children. Such social interaction, particularly with peers, may be the principal factor liber-

ating the child from his lack of objective thinking, his cognitive egocentrism:

* In the course of his contacts. . . the child increasingly finds himself forced to reexamine his own precepts and concepts in the light of those of others, and by so doing gradually rids himself of cognitive egocentrism (Flavell, 1963).

One could easily despair when contemplating the nature of childhood sexual experiences and sex education in a restrictive society (Martinson, 1981), but despair may not be called for. Little research followed Freud's 1905 formulation for over half a decade. But we know a good deal about child sexuality today, as this and other chapters give evidence of, and the decade of the 70's and 80's has seen a growing recognition of child sexuality and sexuality within the family as witnessed by the first and second international symposia on child sexuality (Cook and Wilson, 1979; International Symposium: Childhood Sexuality, Montreal, Canada, September 7-9, 1979) and the first International Symposium: Family Sexuality (Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 1-3, 1980). (See also Stoller, 1973 and Grønseth, 1975.)

Not only in professional concern and research, but also in practice, children are experiencing a change. Many children (and I believe their number is increasing) are being reared in homes that are at least passively permissive of child sexual behavior, and some are actively permissive (Yates, 1978; Lindahl, 1973). Developments in other societies with a formidable tradition of restriction (and I am thinking primarily of the Scandinavian countries) lead one to believe that change in the attitudes of adults toward child sexuality and changes in the quality of sex education are possible, though by no means inevitable (Linnér, 1973; Martinson, 1977; 1981).

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4

PROCESSES
IN
SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

THORE LANGFELDT

The degree to which the public is willing to acknowledge the significance of "delicate" subjects is an important factor in the determination of scientific research. Even though we have been aware of the importance of childhood sexuality since the days of Freud, it is only in recent years that attempts have been made to investigate childhood sexuality systematically. The gradual increase in openness to sexual questions in our culture has gone through several successive stages: the first stage permitted questions about adult heterosexuality; the next, homosexuality; and the latest area to be explored is childhood sexuality. The recent emphasis on childhood sexuality can be seen in educational practices, film, and literature, as well as in pornography.

This chapter is an attempt to throw some light upon normal developmental processes and the sexual behavior of children by referring to findings of other scientists and in particular to some of my own research and therapy with both adults and children. Between 80 and 100 subjects from my practice were interviewed by means of a tape-recorded diagnostic interview. The subjects were from 7 to 67 years of age and a very mixed group. The school children, those between 7 and 16, were not systematically sampled, but were fairly representative of Norwegian schoolchildren in Oslo. Additional information was taken from students attending courses in sexology where a part of the

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course consisted in presenting aspects of their own sexual development. The third group consisted of children from 9 to 18 years of age who had gone through therapy because of sexual problems. Their problems were orgasmic dysfunction, fear of sexuality, telephone sex fixation ("obscene" calls), exhibitionism, sexual acting-out, and aggressive sex, including rape fantasies.

A psychosocial analysis based on interviews with boys in the streets, who discussed their culture has also been used in this discussion. Additional interviews with 25 boys engaged in boy prostitution in Oslo, together with interviews of male homosexuals and pedophiles are included.

PHYSIOLOGY OF SEXUAL AROUSAL IN INFANTS AND CHILDREN

The physiological mechanisms behind the behavior of the sex organs are fully developed at the neonatal level. Sexual arousal is characterized by an increase in the pelvic blood flow caused by the parasympathetic nervous system. This leads to erection in the male and lubrication in the female. The latter has been shown to be a direct result of increased vaginal blood flow (Masters and Johnson, 1966). In infants, Halverson (1940) demonstrated that boys showed a high degree of spontaneous erection during waking hours that declined as the child got older. Whether a comparable phenomenon exists for little girls we do not know from direct studies, but results from studies of sleep might shed some light on this problem. Erection during REM-sleep has been demonstrated to occur throughout the stage except for periods of dreams characterized as nightmares (Fisher et al., 1965). The same reaction in the female was demonstrated by Shapiro et al. (1968). Recent studies (Langfeldt, 1981) indicate that spontaneous lubrication and clitoral erection occur in newborns. These are, thus, the physiological analog of erection in the male and can tentatively be hypothesized to follow the pattern reported by Halverson.

The psychological significance of spontaneous sexual arousal in the child is not known, but we do know that a child in a sexually aroused state has a much greater chance of having an orgasm. The decrease in free testosterone in the first year of life might have something to do with this phenomenon. Indeed, the increased possibility of having an orgasm by chance might be its biological function.

The transmission of the pleasure response to the brain seems to have its origin in receptors in the muscles involved in the synchronous orgasmic convulsions. These neural responses are transmitted to the brain, probably involving the preoptic regions (Heath, 1972). Inter-

views with boys and girls seem to indicate that the onset of puberty does not influence the orgasmic intensity; rather, the experience of pleasure during orgasm is more or less the same throughout the years from infancy to adulthood. The hormonal changes during puberty seem to reduce the time from onset of masturbation until orgasm is reached, but this might equally well be related to secondary effects as to anatomical changes of the genital organs.

MASTURBATION AND ORGASM

By the age of 6 or 7, more and more boys start to masturbate. This gradual increase in number has been known a long time, but interviews by the author demonstrate that the onset conditions and mechanisms differ in the two sexes (see Chapter 6).

In spite of a high degree of spontaneous sexual arousal in early childhood, not all children seem to achieve orgasm during masturbation. In our interviews, only about one-fifth of all children interviewed reported having masturbated to orgasm since early childhood. This seems equally distributed across both sexes. Data derived from teachers in some Norwegian kindergartens and from interviews with parents, however, appear to indicate that masturbation is becoming more and more common, probably due to greater parental tolerance.

ETHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SEXUAL INTERACTION

Ethologists have long been interested in sexual behavior in animals. Recent studies of apes and monkeys have shown that early experience of elements of sexual behavior is necessary in the young animal to produce adequate adult sexual behavior. This seems more necessary in males than in females (Harlow, 1962). Hinde and Spencer-Booth (1967) demonstrated that rhesus monkey infants, both males and females, exhibited mounting behavior, and that both sexes also exhibited presenting behavior, the female pattern. Those males who exhibited presenting behavior usually exhibited mounting behavior in the same episode. If the male showed only one behavior, it was mounting behavior, and for females, of course, the reverse was true.

Both mounting and presenting behavior have been observed in human infant boys and girls from about 2 years of age with no indication that the behavior was learned (author's own observations). Lewis (1965) found pelvic thrust movements in human infants starting at 8 to 10 months of age. Unpublished observations and interviews by the author show that pelvic thrust movements in prepubertal boys engaged in group sex play are mostly accompanied by penile erection.

The same was true during mounting behavior. However, when a boy presented himself to another boy, he did not necessarily get an erection. During sexual play both boys and girls showed a strong tendency to exhibit both mounting and presenting behavior within the same behavior episode. Again, if a boy exhibits only one of the patterns, he will normally show mounting behavior, while the opposite is true for the girls.

Sometimes when the children start sex play with children of the same sex, they require a mutual role exchange before they are willing to show any cross-gender behavior at all; this need for mutual role exchange was observed in 4-year-old boys. Age differences seem to play an important role in the requirement of mutuality. Probably in all cultures the older boy mounts the younger, and the younger seems to accept the unilateral role pattern. Mutuality does not seem to be as important when the interaction is masturbation or fellatio.

Interviews with men and boys having homosexual relationships where the boy is heterosexual show that boys between the ages of 12 and 16 very often prefer the presenting, passive, role. This preference does not seem to be related to a requirement or expectation on the part of the man that the boy must assume such a role.

Sexual experience among boys and girls such as mutual masturbation, anal or interfemoral intercourse, and oral sex, does seem to have positive effects on later adult sexual behavior. Adults and youth with sexual problems very often show deficient sociosexual engagement in childhood and adolescence. There are reasons to believe that the development of adequate sexual interaction patterns in adulthood follows lines similar to those observed in nonhuman primates (Hinde and Spencer-Booth, 1967; Harlow, 1962).

SEXUAL CONCEPT FORMATION AND COGNITIVE STRUCTURING

In our culture, the morphological differences between boys and girls are important in their developing conceptualization of sexuality. Parents name a boy's penis; the terms they use are among the first words that he learns. Because of this, the boy learns early the connection between his penis—whatever word he uses in naming it—and feelings of sexual pleasure derived from his easily visualized and manipulated penis. This is an advantage compared to the girl, who has no word for her sexual pleasure organ, the clitoris. There is no common name for clitoris among children in our culture. The girl is therefore dependent on being told by someone who has learned the connection between cli-

toral stimulation and sexual arousal or orgasm. This difference makes sexual communication among boys easier than it is among girls.

Another aspect of sex differences that is worthy of emphasis is the fact that sexual arousal in boys is readily visible and thereby serves as an item of communication between boys, while this is not true for girls. Boys' visible sexual arousal results in social structuring in the "boy sex culture." Boys do appear to be sexually aroused by watching an erect penis, whereas between girls such communication does not exist. Even though girls masturbate and achieve orgasms and have heard words like *masturbation* and *orgasm* they do not necessarily connect the concepts to their own sexual functions. (See also Chapter 5 concerning these semantic inequalities.)

It is, of course, well known that the arousability of the sex organs varies within individuals of all ages, and between individuals, and that anxiety because of conflicts seems to be one of the most important factors in raising the arousability threshold. Impotence in some prepubertal boys was disclosed in the interviews. It would appear that the significance of interactions and fantasies in prepubertal children with respect to later adult sexual problems is underestimated.

Much knowledge about gender identity has been discovered through investigations into transsexuality (Green and Money, 1969). These studies suggest that the first one or two years of life seem to be critical for the establishment of gender identity. Whether the development of different kinds of sexual preferences is related to events in early childhood or to later stages of growth is not yet known. The psychoanalytical tradition relates all sexual preferences to early childhood, but proper scientific evidence for this conclusion is lacking. In fact, we have very little information on this point, but it is known that early homosexual experience does not automatically lead to adult homosexuality. The development of adult homosexual cognitive structuring seems independent of sexual practice, which indicates other possible factors.

Erotic fantasies occur in children of both sexes from a very early age. At the age of 4 or 5, erotic fantasies may occur independently or in relation to sexual events. In our interviews, several children between 6 and 10 reported being sexually aroused by thinking about sexual events. Boys between the ages of 8 and 12 tended to regard these erotic fantasies as evidence of a "dirty mind," while the girls showed less negative attitudes. Homoerotic and incestuous fantasies seem to occur in almost all children and do not seem to distinguish homosexual from heterosexual children.

Such problems in sexual development as exhibitionism, sadistic-

aggressive sexual behavior, and telephone sex in young children seem to occur only in boys; this was affirmed in my data on prepubertal children.

• All the children in our study had in common a strong feeling of guilt about normal erotic fantasies, even though they knew such behavior was normal. They considered boys having sex with each other as highly abnormal. Saying to such young patients, "It is normal to masturbate and most people do it" had very little guilt-allaying effect compared to saying, "I masturbate, I like it, and I am normal."

SENSUALITY AND SEXUALITY

Tension in the body tends to disrupt the flow of sensate feelings. Muscular tension that develops can easily be released, but in late adolescence and in adulthood, tensions disrupting the flow of feeling are more difficult to release. Tension can develop in the neck, shoulders, chest, diaphragm, waist, pelvic floor, knees, and ankles. The mechanisms behind such tensions are not fully understood.

• During muscular therapy, such as that described by Alexander Lowen (1972), careful abdominal or lumbar region massage will, in young children, induce a total body sensation that automatically increases the pelvic blood flow and gives rise to erection or lubrication. Such findings suggest that the experience of pleasure in the total body during caressing is affected by muscular tension in the body. The same is true during orgasm. Hypotonic as well as hypertonic muscles disrupt the body's flow of sensations.

Processes in the development of sensuality are not fully understood at the present stage of knowledge. However, in sex therapy, as described by Kaplan (1974), sensuality is necessary for adequate sexual functioning. Lack of sensuality in the form of caressing of the body, can be developed through sensuality training therapy. This is an important process in the progress of sex therapy, which indicates that sensuality is something that can be behaviorally trained in humans.

The concept of sensuality needs closer analysis. Several scientists have tried to define sensuality. Lowen (1972) is one of those who have described sensuality as a whole uninterrupted feeling in the whole body, but without using the words *sensuality* or *sensual arousal* to describe it. It seems reasonable to explain the relationship between sensual arousal and sexual arousal in the following way: A total uninterrupted pelvic sensual arousal will produce erection or lubrication, the signs of sexual arousal. A local sexual arousal might occur without a sensual arousal from peripheral or central stimulation. One might as-

sume that interruptions of the flow of sensation in the body by tension in muscles is related to the internalization of sexuality. If so, this internalization can take place from early infancy as a result of stimulation and repression present in the child's environment.

Our culture has a very strong taboo with respect to the genital regions in children. If any kind of sexual arousal should occur initiated by another person, punishment might be the consequence. In some other cultures, however, the situation is different. Among the Cubeo Indians in the northwest Amazon body contact is very pronounced, and Goldman (1963) suggests that this might explain their openness to sexual arousal with respect to both masturbation and homosexuality in childhood and adolescence. In several cultures mothers caress the child's genitals during nursing and in other cultures they do the same to quiet the baby. While the developmental significance of these experiences is yet not known, it definitely does not seem to harm the child. If we are going to pay respect to children's feelings and emotions, we cannot consider sexual interaction involving children as criminal.

More scientific observations and experiments are required in order to understand the relationship between sensuality and sexuality, and this paper should only be seen as proposals for further investigation.

CONCLUSIONS

Sexuality in children is not only a simple matter of sexual arousal. Psychosexual development seems to include at least:

1. Gender identity and its dimorphic aspects and critical periods.
2. Sexual interaction, with its ethological and dimorphic aspects of mounting and presenting; and mutual caressing and sexual play, where the performance also constitutes a medium of social change.
3. Masturbation with its development and significance for sexuality and social structuring from youth to adulthood.
4. Erotic fantasies and their relationship to inadequate sexual functioning and to guilt feelings.
5. Sensual arousal and its relationship to caressing and learning, and to muscular tension and disruption of total body sensation and sexual dysfunctioning.
6. Concept formation and the integration of sexual communication.

These, and probably several other processes have to be studied in order to understand one of the most neglected topics in childhood development.

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5

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR
OF
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN:
TEACHERS' OBSERVATIONS

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JENS E. SKÅR

It is remarkable that the social sciences have to a large extent ignored the potential for extensive research in childhood sexuality, given the rich foundation for such endeavors laid out by Freud in his early works. Certainly our general understanding of childhood development has increased enormously in the recent past, due to the vast amount of empirical research that has been carried out, and this has in turn given us ample opportunity to develop important conceptual formulations and theories of childhood development. When it comes to children's sexuality and sexual development, however, the research that has been carried out is very limited. Only in the last few years has there been a growing interest in this field.

Even though many accepted aspects of childhood sexuality are closely related to Freud's findings, it is important to point out that his original theory of infant and childhood sexuality was largely based on experiences with adult patients. Later psychoanalytical research has focused on direct observation and description of children (Anna Freud, 1944; Spitz and Wolf, 1949; Spitz, 1945). These data were put into a psychoanalytical frame of reference in an attempt to verify psychoanalytical theory in a deductive way. However, it is difficult to test a the-

ory that rests on the mental imagery of infants and young children, and this methodology has often resulted in a gap between theory and empirical observations.

We think the first step toward a valid understanding of the nature of sexual expression in the normal child is to pursue thorough descriptive studies.

Up to the present time, descriptive studies of sexual behavior have mainly focused on adults (Auken, 1953; Hertoft, 1976; Schmidt and Sigusch, 1972 [in Hertoft, 1976]; Asmervik, 1972; Hite, 1976; Kinsey et al., 1948, 1953). Only a few descriptive studies have focused exclusively on childhood sexuality (Sears et al., 1957; Sears, 1965; Newson and Newson, 1968 [in Maccoby and Jacklin, 1975]; Langfeldt, 1977, and Chapter 4 in this volume). Bits of information have also been given by social anthropologists, as summarized by Ford and Beach (1951). Studies of the physiological, anatomical, hormonal, and genetic sides of sexuality have contributed valuable information about the influence of biological variables on sexual behavior and development (Shapiro et al., 1968 [in Langfeldt, 1977, and Chapter 4 in this volume]; Fisher et al., 1965; Hampson, 1965; Hampson and Hampson, 1961; Masters and Johnson, 1966, 1970; Money and Ehrhardt, 1972). Unfortunately, this kind of research on children also is limited by both methodological difficulties and ethical issues.

The results of research on childhood sexuality are summarized by Martinson (1976) and Langfeldt (1977), and Chapter 4 in this volume. Langfeldt identifies some areas where research should be concentrated, such as masturbation; sexual conceptualization and cognitive structuring; sexual interactions among children and between children and adults; sexual interactions from an ethological perspective; erotic fantasies; and sensate learning and influence. (An edited version of this paper appears as Chapter 4 in this volume.) Langfeldt concludes that the scientific study of childhood sexuality is still in its earliest stages.

¶ We believe that, before research in the areas identified by Langfeldt can be fruitful, patterns of, and potentials for, sexual behavior in children must be thoroughly assessed. It is our aim in this chapter to give a systematic and comprehensive description of sexuality in children ages 3 to 7, based on a study conducted in Norway. We will try to describe a wide variety of sexual expression in children, how the different forms of such expression develop, and what attitudes adults have concerning children's sexual behavior. It is our hope that this discussion will bring about new and more detailed studies in childhood sexuality.

METHOD

Data were obtained through individual interviews with 60 preschool teachers, working in nine different kindergartens in Bergen, a major city in Norway (population 230,000). The voluntary interviews were conducted during working hours in the kindergartens.

The interview protocol was fairly structured, consisting of questions with predefined categories for most answers. The first part dealt with biographical data on the interviewee and information about the kindergarten. Next, the questions moved from peripheral aspects of sexuality, such as sex role development and sexual language and curiosity, to more direct sexual behavior, such as sexual exploration, masturbation, and orgasm. The last part of the interview focused upon these adults' attitudes toward children's sexual expressions.

Frequency analysis was used to systematize the data.

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 57 women and 3 men, reflecting the general sex distribution within this occupation in Norway. Their ages ranged from 19 to 63 years, with a mean of 27. Thirty-one of the interviewees were unmarried, 25 were married, and 4 cohabited. Sixteen had children of their own.

Duration of working experience with children varied from 1 month to 21 years, with a mean of 20 months. The number of children in the nine kindergartens at the time of the interviews was about 400.

After gymnasium (general college requirements), the Norwegian preschool teacher's education consists of a one-year internship and two years of structured studies. As a group, preschool teachers are quite active politically and are clearly aware of the kindergarten's position as a focal point for various political, educational, and social issues. On the whole, they represent liberal attitudes toward sexuality and human relationships, although some are advocates of a more puritanical point of view.

In general, the teachers responded with great interest and sincerity to the project. Only very few of those asked refused to participate in the interviews.

TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATION AND ROUTINES IN
NORWEGIAN KINDERGARTENS

The children usually are divided into four groups: ½ to 1½ years, 1½ to 3 years, 3 to 5 years, and 5 to 7 years, although some of the kinder-

gartens have recently started to integrate children from 3 to 7 years of age.

The groups from 3 to 5 and 5 to 7 usually consist of 14 to 18 children and three to four adults, two of whom are interns. The kindergarten is open from 7:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., but only a minority of the children stay for the entire day. The average amount of time spent there is 6 or 7 hours, 5 days a week.

The activities include excursions and other collective activities as well as individual and group play in structured and unstructured settings. An important example of an unstructured play environment that most kindergartens have is a secluded area or room where the children can play without being disturbed or observed. This area is often furnished with pillows and mattresses, and the children's secret experiments, games, and explorations take place here. The preschool teachers try to respect this privacy, and usually leave the children to themselves. After the main meal (early afternoon) there is often a rest period for the younger groups, when all the children and the teachers lie down on mattresses.

Outdoor activities are stressed strongly, and a kindergarten typically is surrounded by a large area with a playground, trees, and bushes. However, in the Norwegian climate, the bad weather is often a hindrance to outdoor activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The accuracy of all observational data is always very hard to determine. We have no measures of reliability or validity in this survey. The teachers' reports most likely reflect a mixture of their actual observations, their interpretations, their sexual attitudes, the length of their working experience, etc. The presentation and discussion of the results of our survey must be seen in light of this. The following presentation of the results is based on the grouping and sequence of the questions in the interview protocol.

SEX-TYPED BEHAVIOR

Fifty-eight of the sixty interviewees felt that the behavior of boys in the kindergartens differed from that of girls. Behavioral differences were considered to be clearly established by the age of 3, and became more and more stereotyped as the children got older.

The boys were described as nosier, more vehement, and more physically active than the girls and as being primarily occupied with playing with cars and weapons and with building things. They were also characterized as generally aggressive, impudent, and domineering. The girls were described as less physically active and more amenable;

they were typically occupied with housekeeping play and mother-child games with dolls. The girls were described as more affectionate, contact-seeking, and ready to show their emotions than the boys. Large differences among individuals were reported, but the group differences became clearer with increasing age. These findings are consistent with earlier studies of childhood sex roles (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974).

SEXUAL LANGUAGE AND QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX

Fifty percent of the interviewees indicated that sexual words and expressions were heard in the kindergartens "occasionally," whereas the other 50 percent said "often" or "very often." We identified sexual words and expressions as words related to sexual organs, elimination processes, and sexual acts. The interviewees stressed that words for sex organs and elimination processes were among the children's first acquired words. Initially, these words were of the innocent, accepted variety (*wee-wee*, *weenie*, *ca-ca*, *butt*, etc., from the Norwegian *tisse*, *tiss*, *basj*, *rompe*), and were used among the children for information exchange in toilet training and explanations about anatomy. The preschool teachers were of the opinion that the children had little understanding of the words until they were approximately 4 years old. With increasing age, the children started to use these words as provocations. This use of sexual words to provoke an angry reaction occurred frequently in interaction with adults and seemed to be a way of testing limits. When these words were used in interaction with children, however, it seemed as if the words acquired a more insulting quality. It was also reported that the children in kindergartens located in lower socioeconomic areas picked up words considered more vulgar (such as *cunt*, *cock*, *fuck*, and *shit*, from the Norwegian *fitte*, *pikk*, *pul*, *dritt*) from peers and older children and used them in the same way.

There was a clear tendency for boys to use sexual words more frequently than girls did, but there were no sex differences in the selection of words used.

Parents, preschool teachers, and others frequently convey negative attitudes to children concerning the use of these words, causing negative feelings to be associated in the children's minds with these words, and, by extended association, with other aspects of sexuality. These kinds of associations have been shown to play a part in the etiology of certain psychological problems and sexual maladjustment (Avery, 1970). Use by adults of scatological and sexual words and phrases in expressing negative or aggressive sentiments demonstrates the long-lasting effects of these associations.

The children rarely asked the teachers questions concerning sexual

matters. To the extent that such questions were asked, these young children seemed mainly interested in pregnancy, childbirth, and anatomical differences between the sexes, a result which Hattendorf (1932, in Jersild, 1969) also obtained in a more extensive study of children's questions about sex. There were no sex differences with regard to frequency of questions or areas of interest.

Generally, the kindergarten personnel avoided giving the children any preplanned form of sexual education; however, the children's curiosity was aroused when a teacher or a visiting mother was pregnant, or in situations where the children saw each other or an adult naked (e.g., on a trip to the swimming pool). These expressions of interest were sometimes answered by the teachers' going through explanatory picture books with the children and/or by group discussions about pregnancy, childbirth, and anatomy.

The teacher's observations indicated that they felt that the children's sexual curiosity was much more intense than the number of questions they asked seemed to imply. It is difficult to tell whether the children had learned to avoid asking questions concerning sex or whether their conceptualization of sexuality was limited by cognitive factors. As we have emphasized, parents and other adults can very easily signal to children that they do not want to talk about things related to sexuality; this attitude is perpetuated by the "waiting to be asked" strategy employed in most homes and kindergartens. The children engaged in a variety of sexual behaviors, which will be described, that were crucial in their efforts to become acquainted with the anatomy and functions of their own and others' bodies, but the adults did not give them much structured guidance in these endeavors. We feel that this reflects a general neglect of the child's emotional and sexual development, and it is our position that this aspect of human existence should receive the same emphasis from educators and parents as does the cognitive and physical development of the child.

BODY CONTACT AND INTIMACY

Our need to be touched, caressed, and cuddled is as basic as our need for food (Colton, 1977). Martinson (1976) points to the fetus's capability for sensate experiences and learning, and he stresses the importance of these factors in normal human development. Spitz's study (1945) confirms that the child needs and will actively seek stimulation not only intellectual, but tactile and emotional as well. We see this behavior as motivated by the need to experience physical contact and closeness that persists throughout life.

Ninety percent of the preschool teachers answered that the children "often" or "very often" wanted and actively sought body contact with

them, e.g., touching or being touched, being stroked and held close, sitting on the teacher's lap, being kissed, and kissing. Twenty percent of the interviewees said that at times the body contact took the form of exploration of the adult's body. The main purpose of this proximity-seeking behavior, however, seems to be to experience the pleasure and security of bodily warmth and closeness to an adult, and to receive affection and attention. Boys and girls were reported to seek the same amount of body contact up to the age of 4; from that age on, the boys seemed to approach the preschool teachers less and less to get body contact, whereas no changes were reported in the girls' behavior.

How shall we explain the decrease of this behavior in boys? There is some evidence that boys can sometimes become victims of both homosexual fear in men and heterosexual fear in women. A study by Heilburn and Landauer (in Yussen and Santrock, 1978) shows that fathers often interact more affectionately with their daughters than with their sons. This supports a theory by Langfeldt (1976) that points to a possible rejection process between fathers and sons. The pleasurable and even sexually arousing properties of body contact and caressing may activate homophobic fears in fathers. If a father were to have an erection in an intimate situation with a son, the man, and perhaps the son as well, might consider the circumstances deviant.

On the other hand, women do not display the same visible signs of sexual arousal and need not fear to allow themselves to experience sexual arousal in connection with their sons, should such circumstances occur. Furthermore, the qualities of softness, sensuality, and emotionality are broadly ascribed to the female in our culture, and women therefore are seen as the natural providers of body contact needs for children. Women with sexual anxiety, however, tend to avoid body contact with boys (Sears, 1965): the penis elicits anxiety that can only be avoided by handling the boy less.

In their jobs as preschool teachers, it has been found that women tend to respond with loud reprimands to "aggressive" behavior in boys and to reward the proximity-seeking behavior of girls (Serbin et al., 1973). Such experiences reinforce the proximity-seeking behavior of girls and contribute to its extinction in boys.

Through these experiences and by observations of male behavior, especially in father figures, boys learn to avoid body contact, which does not fit their perception of the male role.

However, the basic need for body contact and closeness does not disappear in boys. Rather, it seems to be channeled into other forms of behavior. The interviewees pointed to the aggressiveness among boys, often revealed in a kind of half-serious, half-playful fighting, involving two or more boys, which could go on for up to an hour. We

suggest that the boys are satisfying part of their need for body contact through this kind of behavior. Many boys take this relationship to intimacy and body contact with them into their adult social and sexual lives, associating intimacy and closeness with active aggression. It is no surprise, then, that an important aspect of a number of sexual difficulties experienced by men is the inability to receive passively in sexual interaction.

SEXUAL PLAY

Authors such as Erikson (1963) and Piaget (1962) have demonstrated the many important functions of play in the developmental process. It allows for the maintenance of affiliations with peers, advances cognitive development, allows for exploration of the environment, provides opportunity to practice future roles in life, and allows the child to work out anxieties and conflicts. Our study demonstrated that children have a great need to live out sexual feelings and curiosity through play.

All the interviewees in our study had observed doctor/nurse/patient games, family role-playing, and similar forms of play among the children in their care. Sixty-five percent said that this kind of playing occurred "often" or "very often." Fifty percent of the preschool teachers said that this play contained direct sexual behavior, such as body exploration, genital manipulation, and coitus training. Much of this play took place in the secluded areas normally found in the kindergartens; here the children often undressed and explored each other's bodies and sexual organs. If the preschool teachers observed the children doing such things as putting fingers or objects into the anus or vagina, or that some children were exerting pressure on others to join in, they would interfere and try to stop the children's games. Other activities, however, were generally permitted to go on undisturbed. It was also stressed by the interviewees that being naked in and of itself seemed to be very enjoyable for the children.

Ethnic studies have shown that sexual play and training go on to varying degrees in all cultures (Ford and Beach, 1951; Money et al., 1970), and ethologists have pointed out that all primates train themselves, through early play, in the movements and positions that will later be used in the reproductive act (Harlow, 1971; Hinde and Spencer-Booth, 1967; Langfeldt, 1977, and Chapter 4 in this volume). There is reason to assume that a certain amount of training of this kind is also necessary in humans.

Although new information and slowly changing attitudes are having an effect on parental and societal reaction to children's sexual play, there is still considerable suppression of such behavior. In a retrospective study of female sexuality (Skår and Gundersen, unpublished data,

1978), over half the sample said that sexual play and activity in the childhood years had to go on without parents' knowledge. Thirty-five percent of these women indicated that their childhood sexual experiences had "to a large extent" created guilt feelings in them. This is a noteworthy finding, considering the fact that 25 percent of this group within the sample also said that they had significant sexual problems, mainly in the area of orgasmic inadequacy.

Langfeldt (1977, and Chapter 4 in this volume) claims that adults and young people with sexual dysfunction very often have shown a lack of sociosexual interaction in childhood and adolescence. Common sense would indicate that the possibility of sexual maladjustment in adulthood could well be reduced if all children were given straightforward information about the sexual organs' role in intercourse and reproduction, and if they could also take the knowledge of these facts for granted in other children and adults.

CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN THEIR OWN AND OTHERS' GENITALS

Ninety-four percent of the preschool teachers interviewed stated that the children displayed a marked interest in their own genitals by studying them, fondling them, showing them to others, and so on. Forty-two percent of the teachers thought that girls and boys were equally interested in such activity, while 47 percent answered that boys showed a greater interest in their genitals than girls did. The interviewees gave inconclusive information as to whether this interest increased or decreased with age.

Earlier studies have shown a marked difference in masturbatory patterns between girls and boys in late childhood and early adolescence (Langfeldt, 1977 and Chapter 4 in this volume, Gagnon, 1973). Although these differences have not been studied systematically because of ethical and legal constraints, there is some information available regarding physiological, behavioral, and cognitive differences, which are discussed in depth in the section in this chapter on masturbation and orgasm. We would like to point out here, however, that there may be a relationship among the patterns of self-exploration as seen in our data, the masturbatory patterns described by Langfeldt, and the quality of adult sexual functioning.

Interesting sex differences were also found in the children's interest in other children's genitals. Sixty-four percent of the preschool teachers stated that the children were "sometimes" interested in the other children's genitals, whereas 32 percent said "often" or "very often." The data indicate that this interest increased markedly as the children grew older, and that boys showed a slightly greater interest in other children's sexual organs than girls did. The boys' interest in others'

genitals was primarily directed toward their own sex, whereas the girls showed a more marked interest in the genitals of the boys. In summary, both sexes seemed very much preoccupied with the boys' sexual organs. The boys displayed pride in their penises and in the fact that they could do such things as stand up while urinating. The girls very often showed envy in regard to these capabilities and tried to stand up while urinating, asked why they did not have a penis, and so on.

Other studies have shown the same differences concerning children's interest in other children's genitals (Rubin and Kirkendall, 1970). Gundersen and Skår (1977), in a study of sexual behavior among newborns to 3-year-olds, found that these differences were observable from the age of 2 on.

Quite a few of the preschool teachers in our study explained this phenomenon by pointing to the fact that the penis is much more visible than the vagina and clitoris and thus much more interesting to the children. This is a very logical, reasonable explanation that appears to explain both the girls' and the boys' behavior. We feel that this explanation is too dependent on the differences in boys' and girls' knowledge of their bodies. The anatomy and physiology of the female genitals can be a hindrance to children's understanding of how these organs function and are structured. In addition, most languages have specific slang words that label parts and functions of male sexual organs, while girls are left with only a single word describing their sexual organs, and no colloquial terms with which to refer to their sexual functioning and to the different parts of their genitals. Cultural values and norms perpetuate this state of ignorance in girls; in fact, boys as well as girls lack information about female genital structure and functions. Boys, on the other hand, seem to get much more information about their own genital organs and structural functions from their peers, older playmates, and even adults than do girls; much of boys' sex education takes place in the subculture. (See Chapter 4.)

Without a doubt, this unequal state of knowledge and experience leads to problems and conflicts that can have a negative influence on both female sexuality and on adult sexual interaction. Freud (1968) discusses the above-mentioned pattern; in a footnote added in 1920, he states that this phenomenon leads to a lack of respect for girls on the part of boys that may result in lifelong deprecating attitudes of males toward females.

It seems apparent that elimination of many of the problems mentioned could be facilitated by giving detailed information about female as well as male genital structures and functions to both boys and girls at an early age. Further studies must be conducted in this area, and

we hope to see the phenomenon of interest in one's own and in others' genitals explored in relation to the following areas: identification processes; role acceptance; reinforcement patterns in interaction between male and female caretakers and children; analyses of verbal and nonverbal communication; and attribution processes mediating sexual experiences.

GENERAL MODESTY. To the extent that modesty existed among the children in toilet, washing, and bathing situations, it appeared mainly in relation to the children's peers; the boys seemed a little bit more concerned about privacy than the girls. The children were quite undisturbed by the presence of adults. Seventy-five percent of the interviewees reported that, where observed, modesty seemed to increase as the children got older.

In situations where the children were playing naked, either outdoors or indoors, there did not seem to be much shyness, although some children never undressed. Some preschool teachers reported conflicts with parents who could not tolerate the fact that their children were going naked in the kindergartens. The teachers solved this problem by seeing to it that the children were properly dressed when the parents arrived to pick them up. Generally, the teachers did not interfere when the children undressed.

SEXUAL MODESTY. Sears (1965) suggests that sexual modesty is one of the earliest learned motivational systems. The dynamics of this process is the suppression of children's sexuality by adults, who force the children to fulfill parental wishes concerning their behavior by introducing prohibitions and rules which do not take the children's actual needs and behavior into consideration. We feel that Sears's results are dated, at least in relation to Norwegian society. There seems to be a trend in Norway today whereby nakedness is becoming more accepted. Naked interaction within families and in some kindergartens allows the children to feel a more natural relationship to each other's bodies, and our interviews indicate that preschool teachers and parents are to a certain extent deemphasizing sexual modesty training. However, our data do not give information about what happens after the age of 7; we cannot exclude the possibility that this training might start later.

MASTURBATION AND ORGASM

Eighty-five percent of the interviewees indicated that the children engaged in masturbation in the kindergartens. Seventy-six percent of those reporting masturbation claimed that it occurred "seldom" or

"now and then," while 24 percent answered "often" or "very often." The presence of others did not seem to interfere with masturbatory activities.

Twenty-three percent of the preschool teachers had observed orgasm in masturbating children, while 70 percent said that they "did not know." Data on gender differences in masturbation were not obtained.

3 The physiological mechanisms constituting orgasmic competence in humans are fully developed at the neonatal level (Langfeldt, 1977, and Chapter 4 in this volume). Kinsey reports observational data on what appears to be orgasm in male and female children under 1 and 2 years (Kinsey et al., 1948, 1953) of age, and Gundersen and Skår (1977) obtained reports of compulsive masturbation leading to orgasm in children under age 1 who were living in orphanages.

4 As mentioned earlier, the children observed in our study showed a marked interest in their genitals from an early age. Indeed, it is common for children to start manipulating their sexual organs as soon as their coordination of hand and arm movements is sufficiently developed (Kaplan, 1974). Large individual differences were reported in masturbatory activity: some children masturbated for a major part of the day, while others never seemed to engage in it. The children who were extremely preoccupied with masturbation represented a problem for the preschool teachers; these children normally isolated themselves from all activities going on around them while masturbating. They were described as hard to reach, and, in quite a few cases, as having conduct disorders. Some of the preschool teachers pointed to difficult home environments and insecurity in these children's backgrounds. In cases where communication between home and kindergarten was good, parents admitted that these children's persistent, compulsive masturbation was a problem for them as well. Excessive masturbation can be of diagnostic value, but one must be careful not to label a child only on the basis of its masturbatory activities.

The masturbatory behavior in these cases seemed to have a soothing, sedative effect on the child, and it did not seem contingent on orgasm. This seemed to be the case with the more moderate masturbators as well.

If genital manipulation coincides with antecedent spontaneous sexual arousal as reported in both boys and girls (Halverson, 1940; Shapiro et al., 1968, in Langfeldt, 1977, and in Chapter 4 in this volume; Fisher et al., 1965), orgasm may occur. In other instances, genital manipulation may cause sexual arousal and thus could also lead to orgasm, but our data did not indicate that the orgasmic experience was continually sought by the children. These observations raise questions

concerning whether orgasm in children is similar to the adult orgasm; what meaning it has to the child; and, as Gagnon (1973) puts it, "whether infants who are so experienced have been set on an alternative path of development."

The visible bodily signs of orgasm in children, described to us by the interviewees, were in some cases identical with adult reactions during the orgasmic cycle. Most of the preschool teachers, however, were quite uncertain in their answers. This might indicate that few children actually experienced orgasm, but it is also possible that the interviewees did not expect orgasm in children and therefore did not observe it. It is also conceivable that some teachers had not themselves experienced orgasm and were, therefore, unable to interpret it in children.

Gagnon (1973) distinguishes between orgasm competence and orgasm performance. Orgasm competence is the specific organization of the biological substrate that makes the orgasm performance possible. Gagnon sees the translation from competence to performance as a learning process whereby the orgasm acquires a sought-after character. What is learned is a sexual script, a psychological representation of scripted social behavior determined by the interaction of physiological, psychological, social, and cultural-historical factors.

The concept of script shares certain similarities with the concept of plans or schemes in that it is a unit large enough to comprehend symbolic and nonverbal elements in an organized and time-bound sequence of conduct through which persons both envisage future behavior and check on the quality of ongoing conduct (Gagnon, 1973: 29).

Before this script is developed, the occurrence of orgasm is accidental, not the goal for masturbatory behavior. The widening of a child's experiences, and her increasing cognitive development and ability to recall all expand the capability for fantasy in the child and create the potential for expectations. In this way the child's sexuality becomes eroticized (Martinson, 1976). This process provides the social and psychological factors enabling the child to convert its orgasm competence into orgasm performance.

We would like to suggest a few of many possible influences that may account for the individual variations so apparent in children's masturbatory behavior.

Individual learning histories can be extremely different from one another, and discoveries concerning sexual anatomy and functions can occur at widely varying age levels.

It is also safe to say that very few, if any, children in Western cultures experience active support and encouragement of their sexual experiences and sexual development. Society's repressive attitudes to-

ward sexuality in general and childhood sexuality in particular lead to repeated restrictions on children's sexual expressions. Masturbation thus can easily be associated with shame, anxiety, and guilt feelings. Depending upon the severity of punishment experienced, children will tend to avoid the appearance of this behavior, at least where adults can observe it.

Kinsey et al. (1953) suggest another possible reason for the differences in masturbatory behavior, namely, that children might vary in their genital sensitivity.

Our present knowledge about masturbation and orgasm in children is, regrettably, still vague and fragmentary. A great deal of scientific investigation in this field remains to be carried out in the future.

ADULT REACTIONS TO CHILDREN'S SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN THE KINDERGARTENS

Ninety-eight percent of the responding teachers said that it was natural for children to exhibit sexual behavior. When asked how often they thought sexuality appeared in the children's behavior, 54 percent of the preschool teachers answered "sometimes," 40 percent answered "often" or "very often." Three percent said "never."

Concerning reactions to children's sexual behavior, the preschool teachers divided into two groups, a majority favoring permissiveness and a minority favoring restrictiveness. When asked about how one *ought* to react, however, the answers reflected much more acceptance and permissiveness. Forty percent of the interviewees felt obliged to react negatively to the sexual behavior of children, and 80 percent of these felt that it was the expectations and moral values of the parents that made them so react.

Seventy-four percent stated that the children's sexual manifestations were "sometimes" discussed among teachers in the kindergartens, and that the topic was only rarely discussed with parents. The sole reason for discussing the children's sexuality seemed to be occasions when individuals' behavior became too much of a problem to be overlooked.

There was a clear discrepancy between the preschool teachers' actual reactions and their concept of ideal reactions in relation to the children's sexual life.

On the question about actual reactions, the group favoring permissive reactions was slightly larger than the group favoring restrictions. Examples of answers from the larger group included: "no restrictions"; "Ignore it"; "It's a natural thing"; and "Let the children act out their sexuality." In the other group we obtained answers such as: "Divert their attention"; "Set limits"; "Quiet them down"; "Tell the children

it is not allowed"; and "Tell them it is nasty." There is no established policy to guide teachers in these situations. The variety of their answers indicates a profound uncertainty among the kindergarten personnel, probably due to several factors: lack of knowledge, strong taboos on discussion of the topic, and presumed obligations to react. This last factor is supported by the answers to questions concerning how the preschool teachers felt they ought to react: the group favoring permissive attitudes was much larger, and the answers were more uniform, than had been the result of answers to questions regarding actual reactions.

The moral expectations that the interviewees presumed the parents to have made it difficult for the teachers to react in a consistent manner to the children's sexual behavior. It is important to point out that the preschool teachers' feelings of moral obligation usually had no influence in actual discussions with parents. These feelings may well be projections of the preschool teachers' personal attitudes toward sexuality, as well as a product of general societal values and norms.

As a result of our work in the kindergartens, we were invited to a few teachers' meetings and parent-teacher meetings. Here we experienced expressions of an enormous desire for knowledge on the part of both preschool teachers and parents, and both groups expressed very positive and open attitudes about childhood sexuality. We feel that open discussion among adults concerning childhood sexuality would clear away much uncertainty and create a much healthier atmosphere for children.

CONCLUSION

The child must be seen as a sexual being, in whom sexuality is a dynamic force in total personality development, a force determining much of his or her happiness and fulfillment as an adult. This attitude can be fostered when parents, teachers, and children all have factual, unbiased knowledge about children's sexuality. Lack of this kind of information created a great deal of uncertainty, many conflicts, and generally ambivalent treatment of the children in our study. Ambivalent reactions on the part of adults can easily complicate children's sexual development, and use of restrictions is thought to contribute to children's feelings of anxiety, shame, and guilt in relation to their sexuality.

Increasing societal openness concerning sexuality, and the continual breakdown of sexual taboos, are permitting a continuously widening range of questions concerning human sexuality to be subjected to scientific research. We would like to see studies of sexual problems in

children conducted in the near future, as well as further studies, both descriptive and experimental, of sexual development in the modal child. Work of this sort is a necessity if we are going to give our children the kind of sexual upbringing and education that will bring out their total potential as children and as adults.

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6

CHILDHOOD MASTURBATION: INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

THORE LANGFELDT

Although mutual and individual masturbation are recognized sexual activities in many cultures, including our own, and the most common means of sexual gratification in children and adolescents is masturbation, very little research exists on the subject. Considering that masturbation is widely regarded as a normal activity in our society today, it is surprising that the old taboo still prevails to the extent that almost no effort has been made to help young people with masturbation problems and conflicts. Erection, lubrication, orgasmic pleasure, and demonstrations of masturbating techniques are almost exclusively left out of books and films about childhood sexuality, and are never depicted in the general media. Questioning whether the child's orgasm is pleasurable or not is never done. If masturbation is depicted or discussed, the subject is always an adult. Only recently have we been able to read in popular magazines about the masturbatory experiences of adults.

There is thus an enormous gap between the availability to adults of sexual advice and therapy and what is offered to children. Marked social change in attitudes toward childhood sexuality is needed before the child can be fully accepted as an integrated individual with the right to sexuality.

There are noticeable gender differences in behavior, language, and social organization in masturbation. Only boys tease about masturbation; girls take it more seriously. Furthermore, girls have a tendency to masturbate alone, while boys seem to gather in groups and play with

their genitals. Another gender difference is shown in the fact that my interviews with kindergarten children indicate that girls obtain more orgasms than do boys.

The onset mechanism of masturbatory activity is yet not fully understood (Langfeldt, 1978; Mountjoy, 1974). Children start masturbating at different ages, and while almost every schoolboy today masturbates by the age of puberty, girls appear to follow a different pattern (see Chapter 4 and Langfeldt, 1981).

Information about childhood sexuality is important to the child's understanding of his or her own sexual development. But who informs the child about masturbation? How is information communicated, and how is it corrected as knowledge about sexuality increases?

This chapter is an attempt to illuminate some of these questions and to structure the information in terms and systems relevant to the child's own situation, rather than to employ the standard psychoanalytical approach that emphasizes childhood sexual activity as processes preceding adult sexuality. The data mainly derived from interviews with children and adults and from therapy with both children and adults.*

PHYSIOLOGICAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF CHILDHOOD MASTURBATION

Sexual activation in the child, as in the adult, is characterized by erection in the boy and by lubrication in the girl, both resulting from increased blood flow in the pelvic region. It has been shown that spontaneous erections appear very frequently in boys in early childhood (Halverson, 1940). From a physiological point of view, there are reasons to believe that girls exhibit spontaneous lubrication with similar frequency at similar ages. (For discussion, see Chapter 4.) During this state of sexual activation, the sensation response of the penis or the clitoris is increased, which of course increases the chance of having an orgasm by coincidental movements during exploration of the body.

The anatomy and physiology of the female genitals make it possible for girls to conceal both sexual activation and orgasm, so that neither event is for girls as subject to direct social sanctions as it is for boys. Pressing the legs together, for example, is in many instances sufficient stimulation to obtain orgasm. However, on the negative side, since these processes are less visible in the girl, her sexual functions do not act as nonverbal signals to other girls, as they do in boys. This reduces the amount of transfer of sexual information among girls who play to-

*See Chapter 4 for a description of the subjects and research methods employed.

gether and might be sexually aroused by one another if their individual sexual activity were more apparent.

On the other hand, visible erection, orgasm, and ejaculation in the boy are gender-specific ways of mediating important sexual events for boys. Because no muscular contraction in the pelvic region can directly stimulate the glans penis, boys have to perform an active manual or rubbing movement of the penis in order to obtain orgasm. During play with other boys, both erection and orgasm in a boy are events having nonverbal signal value to which boys normally respond by becoming sexually aroused themselves. Thus, boys' sexual functions have a communicative value.

With respect to language, male-female differences seem to have played some role in labeling the event of masturbation. Most languages have a slang term for male masturbation that labels without describing the behavior, while masturbation in females can only be signified by use of a formal word or set of words describing the process. This lack of convenient terms for discussing female masturbation has contributed to the poor communication about their sexuality among girls. (For further discussion, see Chapter 4.)

ONSET MECHANISMS OF CHILDHOOD MASTURBATION

The proportion of preschool children who masturbate and at what ages is not known (Spitz, 1975), but one study reports that teachers of kindergarten-aged children in Norway indicate that between one-third to one-half of the children in their care are engaged in masturbatory activity, while almost all the children show interest in sex (see Chapter 5). Some of these kindergartens are very restrictive and, interestingly, report little sexual activity; whether this is due to restrictions on exhibiting sexuality or to failure to interpret sexual behavior as sexual is not known.

During the first two years of life there do not seem to be gender differences in masturbation onset mechanisms as marked as those that can be noted in later childhood. The child starts to explore his own body after having reached a certain level of muscular control and coordination. Sexual activation may occur as a result of spontaneous sexual arousal or manipulation by the child or by another individual.

- Some children, mostly girls, utilize objects such as bars in the bedstead or other objects that by coincidence have stimulated them to orgasm.

Some children masturbate without reaching orgasm; in most of these cases, the reason was poor technique or not masturbating long enough. There were children in the author's studies, both boys and girls, who reported that they achieved their first orgasm years after

they started to masturbate; some of these children thought the orgasm meant that they were sick and would have to be operated on. It was more common among the girls, however, to think that an orgasm was not normal.

After the age of five or six, gender differences with respect to onset of masturbatory activity become more pronounced. Girls seem to continue to start masturbation as a result of isolated exploration or coincidence, such as in the following cases from interviews with parents, whereas boys usually start in a social context.

* Ann, 12 years old: "It happened the first time when I was 9 and was climbing the rope in gymnastics. On my way down I had the rope between my legs and had my first orgasm."

* Christine, 18 years old: "I had my first orgasm when I was 14 years old. I borrowed by girl friend's bike and all of a sudden I felt a tickling between my legs. That was the way it started. I did not know what it was until my girl friend told me all about it, but that was two years later."

• Girls seem to follow this pattern of coincidental onset of masturbation more or less for the rest of their lives. Some girls do start masturbating after reading or being told about it, but this does not seem to be sufficient information to begin the activity in most cases.

In boys, however, the picture is different. Many boys who have not started masturbating in early childhood may begin to do so because of sociosexual communication and learning.

* Robert, 14 years old: "When I was 10 years old my best friend Jim, who was two years older, showed me his penis and how to masturbate. We are still doing it together."

* Arthur, 18 years old: "We were more than six of us from 8 to 13 years of age, and Bill instructed us how to do it. A bunch of boys lined up jerking off; it is funny to think about it now."

• The third onset phase in boys is around the time of puberty and first ejaculation. It might be assumed that boys around the age of puberty, because of social pressures, are most likely to start masturbating because it is expected at that age.

It is of interest that some boys stated, during interviews, that they had had their first ejaculation at the same time that they had their first orgasm; other boys had one nocturnal emission first. Since a number of boys reported that they achieved their first ejaculation along with their first orgasm, one might speculate whether a boy can to some extent control the time of his first ejaculation. Data on nonorgasmic boys

show that, before therapy, they experienced only two or three ejaculations a year, possibly an indication that boys can suppress ejaculation repeatedly over a period of several months.

The onset of puberty did not seem to have any influence on the sensation, fantasy, or masturbatory patterns in those boys in the author's study who had started masturbating before puberty, or in the girls. (Puberty may play a much smaller role in the development of sexuality than is usually thought to be the case.) Some boys started to masturbate more regularly after having their first ejaculation, but other boys were masturbating regularly long before.

Both boys and girls are capable of multiple orgasms, but boys usually have fewer orgasms per masturbation incident. However, several boys in the author's sample reported having two or three orgasms without losing the erection. This pattern does not necessarily change because of puberty, but the multiorgasmic capacity appears to decrease in boys in the postpubertal period. In girls, however, the opposite is true: the more skilled in masturbating they become, the more orgasms they have. •

• Several children interviewed by the author seemed to have problems accepting pleasure during orgasm and felt inhibited from indulging in masturbatory pleasure; this was seen in both girls and boys. The masturbatory activity of some boys was inhibited by their mothers' invading their bedrooms in the evening and interrupting their privacy.

• While most girls usually masturbated in their beds, several boys in the sample had started to masturbate on the toilet. (They claimed that the toilet was convenient in order to get rid of the ejaculate.) In those boys who masturbated exclusively on the toilet, a tendency to repress the orgasmic pleasure was seen. •

SOCIAL GROUPING: THE BOYS' SUBCULTURE

At the time children become occupied with social activity and organization, exchange of sexual information increases. Words, jokes, songs, and sexual verbal duelling will be a part of prepubertal life, particularly for boys 8 to 12 years of age. Erection, which seems easy to condition, may often occur in boys in such situations, and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, boys will be sexually aroused by looking at other boys having erections. Eventually these observations lead boys to start grouping together in secret in order to exhibit their sex organs and compare sizes. Often these groups develop into masturbation groups with very restricted recruitment. In these groups, some boys will learn to masturbate for the first time in their lives. Older boys in the groups sometimes correct misunderstandings about sexuality or,

unfortunately, implant them and discuss techniques that can improve orgasm. This means of giving and receiving sex information seems to reduce guilt feelings and sexual anxiety among the group members.

These groups serve an important sex education function; in most cases, this is the only sex information that a boy receives. In school, sex education often is presented several years too late and is irrelevant to the child's own situation.

Sexual interaction in such groups varies from looking at each other masturbating to mutual masturbation, fellatio, and interfemoral and anal intercourse. If they play at intercourse, there is always a requirement of mutuality with respect to playing the female role. Only younger boys seem to accept a unilateral relationship with older boys.

In the author's studies, boys in such groups seldom considered themselves to be homosexuals; inside the group the homosexual activity was legitimized and considered as play or training, while the same activity outside the group was considered as homosexuality. Nevertheless, they never spoke to any one outside the group about their sexual activity. Recruiting to the sex-group subculture followed the pattern of young boys being initiated by older members of the group. Children that were socially insecure had problems finding such groups, and in many cases they were not accepted. In fact, older boys who did not belong to a group and showed interest in joining risked being rejected and called "queer." Having a girl friend would in some cases result in a boy's leaving his group, but some boys were engaged in both heterosexual and homosexual activity without problems.

A severe mental handicap such as being mentally retarded, decreased the chances of a boy's getting into a sex group. Such boys were very often called "queer" if they showed any interest in sex whatsoever. However, it could be useful to have such a boy as a group member: if the existence of a group were revealed, the boys could blame the disturbed boy for seducing the members into the group. Even adults tended to suspect a retarded child of being the initiator in interactive sexuality. This actually was true in several cases where the boys in the group were rather young, between 7 and 10 years of age, and the disturbed child was some years older. Furthermore, these boys were often not clever in hiding their sexuality and were therefore caught by adults.

Besides being a sex information source, the group activity also increased the boys' sexual skills. Some boys practiced start-stop procedures during mutual masturbation, and some of these boys who were later interviewed as adults reported a high degree of orgasmic control during coitus with women.

SEX ATTITUDES AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Investigation of the attitudes that arise in children that can relate to their sexual, particularly masturbatory, problems is only at a preliminary stage. However, some factors have been identified:

1. Lack of knowledge about one's own body and sexual functions
2. Dislike of touching one's own body and genitals
3. Fear of retribution if pleasure is experienced
4. Exaggerated fear of being discovered by parents during masturbation, leading to guilt and inhibition of masturbatory activity
5. Lack of knowledge about what sexual activities, fantasies, and attitudes are normal

Among Norwegians today, and presumably in other Western cultures, it is rare for people to believe that masturbation is dangerous to the body. Fear of becoming insane as a result of masturbatory activity was never heard of during the author's interviews. Nevertheless, most children considered masturbation not only a private activity but also to some extent unwholesome and therefore unwanted. Some also had a feeling that overdoing masturbation could lead to addiction. The insecure attitude about their sexuality found in most children seems to be an important causative factor in the problems that arise; this and the privacy of masturbation, even though the group experience is helpful, contribute to preventing the child from receiving supportive information from authoritative adults. Children were sometimes told, "Masturbation is normal and you don't have to be ashamed," but permissive supportive statements such as, "I masturbate and I like it; you should do it too" almost never were heard from adults.

Thus, privacy concerning sexual feelings and fantasies makes information exchange difficult. Boys ritualize their information and restrict it to boys' subgroups where the prevailing rules and the prejudices determine the content of the information exchanged. Individual personal needs will therefore be opposed if not representative of the group's content. Among girls, information exchange is more likely to take place with girl friends in relation to reading about sexual subjects.

Girls never exchange information through ritualized interaction, as boys do. As an example of the problems this can cause, girls may mistake vaginal lubrication for orgasm, believing that an orgasm can be achieved only during intercourse. This misconception can persist even if a girl does experience orgasm during masturbation.

Very few adolescents could be characterized as having a confident attitude concerning masturbation, that is, one free from shame and guilt feelings. Adolescent boys in the author's studies who had expe-

rienced ongoing masturbatory relationships with adult men had more confident attitudes toward masturbation.

Some adolescents in the author's studies who did not experience masturbation as a significant phase in the development of their sexuality, but rather as a short-lived, temporary experience, felt that this created conflicts for them in adulthood.

* The author interviewed several persons in their middle teens who tended to regard masturbation as a childish activity that had to be replaced with coitus as soon as possible. In girls this attitude sometimes resulted in efforts to stop masturbating, while boys more often tended toward promiscuity with girl partners. These boys described this activity as *vaginal masturbation*, that is, replacing the boy's hand with a vagina. In order not to become too emotionally involved with a girl, a boy had to change partners frequently. (This might be part of the dynamics behind prostitution.)

EROTIC FANTASIES

Even though almost every subject interviewed reported having had erotic fantasies, the significance of such fantasies was difficult for them to explain. The reaction to fantasy content, however, was more clear: almost every individual reported fantasies and dreams about sexuality that were frightening. They feared that fantasies about homosexual and incestuous activity would activate them to perform such acts. Children also actively used erotic fantasies to become sexually aroused.

The capacity for erotic fantasy appears very early in life, possibly after the third or fourth year (Martinson, 1979). Every child probably does some erotic fantasizing. Not everyone fantasizes during masturbation, however. Several children and adults in the author's studies reported no fantasy when they masturbated, although they had erotic fantasies in other situations. Some adolescents even reported that their strongest orgasms were achieved without any fantasy at all.

Several homosexuals interviewed by the author claimed that their homoerotic fantasies supported their recognition of themselves as homosexuals. Whether they recognized themselves as homosexuals before they received support from their fantasies was not clear.

MASTURBATION DEFICITS AND PROBLEMS

Sexual problems in children are not necessarily recognized as such by the children themselves. However, our culture's strong taboo concerning masturbation has left children without help for such conflicts and problems about masturbation as do exist. Whereas adults in our soci-

ety are offered help for sexual problems openly, and their sexuality is discussed in films, newspapers, and books, children's sexuality is ignored. Children have access to information about adult sexuality and contraceptives, but information appropriate to their own ages and situations is rarely given. At the present time, some of the widely experienced problems of children with regard to masturbation can be listed as follows: ♦

1. Difficulty in achieving a proper erection or lubrication
2. Delayed orgasm
3. Anorgasm (in spite of masturbatory activity)
4. Muscular pain during orgasm
5. Depression, anxiety, or guilt feelings after masturbating to orgasm
6. Repressed sensation, little or no feeling about masturbation or orgasm

There are no reasons to believe that childhood sexual problems will disappear by themselves any more than adult sexual problems will disappear.

These are the dominant problems with children's masturbation that were found in my material.

* ♦ Lack of knowledge and misunderstandings about sexuality are the two most common causes of sexual problems in children and adolescents, and are more pronounced than people normally think. While girls have a general lack of knowledge, boys are more afraid that they will have erections in inappropriate situations or that their masturbation patterns are wrong. Some boys also wonder if they are achieving orgasm in an abnormal way.

MASTURBATION, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, AND "AGE OF CONSENT"

In discussing child and adolescent masturbation and related social interactions, it is important to mention the problems that are connected with the "age of consent"; in practical terms, this means, "who is allowed to masturbate whom." Mutual masturbation has been discussed as perhaps the major social transaction in boys' social organization; very frequently boys with this type of experience go on to engage in sexual relationships with mature men. This interaction, which usually includes mutual masturbation, is very often initiated by the boy himself, but the law does not recognize this as a factor in attributing "guilt" for the sexual "crime." The adult male, who could be considered the "victim," will usually be considered to be the instigator of the "crime," if the boy and man are discovered together. ♦ *

Sexual interaction between members of the same sex in and of itself does not alter the sexual identity or orientation of the participants.

This is so whether one is over the age of consent and the other is below, or both are below the age of consent.

- * Society today is still influenced by prejudices dating from the nineteenth century, and before, concerning masturbation. This can be seen in: (1) lack of names for female genitals, which suppresses information about female sexuality and female masturbation, (2) prohibition against films and pictures showing childhood and adolescent masturbation, (3) maintenance of criminal laws emphasizing masturbation as a crime per se, (4) prohibition against showing children pictures of any kind demonstrating adult masturbation or masturbation of any kind.
- The adolescent and child in Western society are almost totally left on their own with regard to management of problems and concerns about masturbation. Although many adults will admit that masturbation is normal, no instruction or direct information is likely to be given to a child. We have had a tendency, in our culture, to look on childhood sexuality as something relatively insignificant when compared to adult sexuality, but it is increasingly recognized that the child and his or her sexuality need to be taken seriously at all age levels, similar to adult sexuality. From the perspective of children's rights, the child should be considered to have full rights to pleasurable experiences from its own body (Farson, 1974).

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III

SEXUAL LATENCY

THE three chapters in this section deal with a central controversy in scientific writings on child sexuality. It was first argued by Freud that children progress through discrete stages of sexual development, each stage having distinct erotic foci and developmental issues. In particular, Freud postulated that, following the resolution of the oedipal conflict in the phallic phase, children enter a period of sexual latency, during which sexual issues lie relatively dormant until reawakened by the alarms of approaching puberty. In Chapter 7, two psychoanalysts report on their direct test of Freud's latency period hypothesis by interpretation and coding of the sexual themes embodied in children's responses to research questions. Chapter 8 reviews a broader body of research questioning the validity of Freud's theory. Finally, although numerous writers, especially anthropologists, have argued that sexual latency is a phenomenon of class and culture, Gadpaille, in Chapter 9, advances an original thesis linking the cultural imposition of latency with developmental crises in adolescence.

7

LATENCY: FACT OR FICTION?

SAMUEL S. JANUS
BARBARA E. BESS

IN his theory of infantile sexuality (Freud) described the erotic lives of infants and young children. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud ([Ed.], 1953) established the critical periods of psychosexual development and described the various stages of sexual development during the first four years of life. Freud reconstructed the early sexual experiences, responses, and fantasies of his adult patients, and it was this data that provided the framework for his developmental theory of childhood sexuality.

This study investigates the concept of latency as a paradigm for beginning psychoanalytic research. The concept of latency is taught both in psychiatric residency training programs and in analytic institutes. It may be incorporated as an absolute truth by psychiatrists and analysts in training, but in informal conversation, experienced clinicians say, "Of course there is no latency period"; what seems so obvious is taken for granted. However, we feel it is important to document the obvious. The paucity of investigative work into the myth or reality of the latency period stimulated this study.

This research surveyed a large number of children, and investigated their sexual knowledge and fantasies during the so-called latency period. The results challenge the concept of a latency period, an interruption and cessation of psychosexual development, as universal and as applicable in modern times. It seems as if the latency period does not

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exist; rather, there is a progressive sexual development from infancy through adolescence without interruption, and sexuality remains in the forefront during the period from five to eleven years of age.

METHOD

The child population studies consisted of a heterogeneous group of U.S. school children from kindergarten through the sixth grade. The subjects of this study were 3,200 children from urban and suburban areas. An equal representation of ages, races, socioeconomic groups, religions, and sexes are included. The ages ranged from five to twelve. The elementary school population consisted entirely of children in the latency period.

immature hidden

Essays and picture drawings were analyzed for overt and covert sexual material, sexual identity, gender identity, and sexual activity. Sexual identity is the sense of one's maleness or femaleness. This depends on biologic sexual characteristics and is usually firmly established by age two to three. Gender identity, according to Stoller (1968), is the psychological aspect of behavior related to masculinity and femininity. Gender identity is a social phenomenon and is derived from social cues of important persons in one's life. A part of gender identity is gender role which, according to Money, et al. (1957), is "all those things a person does or says to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or girl." Sexual activity is the third component of one's sexuality. Masturbation is one sexual activity that begins in infancy and continues uninterrupted throughout one's life. In latency, masturbation may be prominent and may be a part of exhibitionism.

Children were instructed to write compositions according to specific instructions. They were told to write about boys and girls, why they should not see X-rated movies, or what they should not know about X-rated movies.

When we tried to evaluate childrens' sexuality by utilizing a straightforward approach with instructions such as "Write about the opposite sex," the responses from the children were sparse, cautious, and brief. After experimenting with various directions, such as "What do you like or dislike about the opposite sex," responses became more factual, indicated greater sexual knowledge, and were more personal. The most productive responses were elicited with the instructions, "Why children shouldn't be allowed to see R and X-rated movies," or, "What is in R and X movies that children are too young to know about?" Here the children proceeded with aplomb to tell all that they knew but were not supposed to know.

RESULTS

As can be seen in Table 7-1, sexual identity is well established by kindergarten in 97 percent of the child population and increases to 99 percent by grade three. Obviously, there is a very small percentage of children who remain unsure of their sexual identity throughout life. Gender identity is also well established by kindergarten, with 78 percent and 74 percent for males and females, respectively. This difference can be explained by cultural pressures, parental pressures, and preferences for masculine activity—that is, for little boys to act like "men." Sexual activity in its overtly recognizable behaviors develops progressively from kindergarten to sixth grade. In kindergarten, 16 percent of male compositions show overt sexuality; in grade six this increases to 56 percent. Interestingly, in the lower grades, girls are less reticent than boys in talking about sexuality and sex-appropriate behavior. By grade six the sexes are apparently equal in speaking out.

Presented below are representative compositions from each age group with an assessment of the psychosexual development manifested in them.

TABLE 7-1. Percentage of Compositions Including Sexual Identity, Gender Identity, and Sexual Activity

Grade	Sexual Identity		Gender Identity		Sexual Activity	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
K-1	97	97	78	74	16	24
2-3	99	99	90	88	18	35
4-5	99	99	98	98	39	44
6	99	99	99	99	56	54

KINDERGARTEN AND GRADE ONE

For kindergarten and grade one children, the teachers wrote the compositions verbatim as told to them by their students.

* If a boy kissed me, I would kiss him more. And I would say I like you. I like Carlos because he is very nice with me. And he took me on a date. I like Carlos more than anybody in my class. I want him to want me. And do you know what? He came to my house and gave me a big, big, big kiss. The first time he saw me I was wearing a beautiful dress and it popped his eyes out. MIGDALIA

* Whoever kisses me I will slap his face. He was a strong boy but he was a nice boy. I asked his name and he didn't answer me. I got so angry that I wanted to throw him out the window. But I couldn't believe that I was going to have a baby. I had the baby and I was glad because that was what I wanted. That was what he told me. NOREEN

* If I was sleeping in the morning and my husband came and kissed me in the neck, I'd kiss him in his mouth and I'd wink my eye at him. LOUISA

* Children in kindergarten and grade one are surprisingly aware of the sex-appropriate activities and roles. There is awareness, and for some children, acting out of physical contact. At this stage there are also a great many love-hate relationships. Children are aware of make-up and clothes and their impact. Words like loving and liking are bandied about. Kissing is a prominent form of sexual activity recognized by both male and female children. They speak freely about kissing and indicate that it is what one does sexually with the opposite sex. There are implications that one does more than kissing and that kisses can be placed in different areas: the neck and the mouth. Children are very much aware of the concepts of pretty and ugly. There is also much awareness of social courtship and marital roles. The compositions show identification with parental roles and with parental sex. At this age, the girls are aware of the cultural stereotype that men fight for female favors. Fears of molestation are also related. Activities like dancing and looking under girls' dresses are both exciting and frightening. The awareness of sex-role differentiation, that is, the differential expectations of the girls and boys, begins to develop and become obvious in this age group. Boys, for example, should be rough and interested in sports; girls are pressured into roles of being demure, clean, and polite. There is a global awareness of marriage, housekeeping, and other sex-related identifications.

GRADES TWO AND THREE

* I don't like boys because they kiss girls. They make the bed stink. I like to call them sissies. They piss the bed. I don't like William because he eats too much. He is fat. The boys always with one finger. Boys scream too much and they are stupid. ELNORA

* I like about the girls. I like when a girl is not very smart but has good manners. I like when their breasts are not flat, and their legs are not fat and they are not conceited. I don't like when they think they could have any boy. I like when they wear short dresses. ANONYMOUS

* I don't like boys because they are nasty. They look under your dress and try to kiss you. Boys are very dirty. I don't like sissies. When you go up the bus they look under your dress. They kiss like girls. They give me the creeps. They are silly. That is what I don't like about boys. They come from Mars. They asked me for a date. I said no and closed the door. Don't come back, I said. If you come back, I will scream. RHONDA

* I don't like boys because they look under girls dresses sometimes. And they look silly when they play jump rope with girls. Sometimes they hit girls and girls hit back. DAISY

* A boy is someone who looks handsome. A boy can be someone with pimples. Some boys grow up to be men. Boys are fellows. Fellows are boys that grow to be men. Boys can be husbands and actors and singers. Boys can get married. Boys can be fathers. Boys are good. Boys can be polite if they know how to handle a girl. But one thing he has to know how to act with girls. You must say you like them, take them out every night, propose to them. Say you want to marry me. CARLOTTA

There is a growth of sophistication from the kindergarteners and first graders to the second and third graders. These children are concerned with role definition and knowing how to handle the opposite sex. There is much preoccupation with voyeurism, both in thought and action. The specificity of sex-related objects, for example, stockings, lipstick, and clothes in general, seems to be prominent. Grade two and three children concern themselves with sexual activity beyond just kissing; they relate to hugging, kissing, and dancing with the opposite sex. There is an awareness of social dating behavior, and they show aspirations toward its initiation. Voyeurism is prominent for both sexes. The boys' play with Ken dolls, while the girls play with Barbie dolls, both sexes acting out dating fantasies. The boys' sexual vocabulary and mannerisms are looked upon as nasty by little girls and as masculine and mature by other boys. Both boys and girls are aware of gender-identity problems and point out and object to, for example, "sissy behavior" in boys.

GRADES FOUR AND FIVE

* I like the legs, the waist, the breasts. I like the way they walk, the way they talk. I also like them because it's nature. TONY

* I like girls. They are beautiful. I am going to marry one. I really like girls. They look beautiful. They dress up beautiful. They dance good. Their legs are lovely. Some girls have long hair and short but I like their hair every way they fix it. They wear beautiful clothing. When girls grow up they are ladies and have children. WILFUS

* Most boys are very strong with their muscles. The boys I like are tall, dark, and handsome. If you go on a date, boys are well mannered. Some boys when they come over to your house they compliment you. This makes a girl feel real good on the inside, a burning sensation. Without boys, girls or women would be helpless. You couldn't share your love, or if you got mugged then a policeman would come to the rescue and save you. Some boys are dream bosses. LINDA

III. SEXUAL LATENCY

✕ I would like to take my girl out someday when I grow up tall. I would get marry, and sure I will have twin babys. I will stick my dick in her pussy. I will suck her lips. WILLIS

✕ I like the shape in general. Legs, waist, face, and breasts. I think I want to be a photographer of nude women. I like what they do with men. I do not like fat women. P.S. I wish I was 12 years older. BILL

✕ I like girls to give them babies. I like girls to kiss them. I like girls to get them in my bed. I like girls to stick them. I like girls legs, I like girls sexy shapes. I like girls that let the boys stick it in them. I like girls to have private parties, and then I'll do my thing and put on my door do not disturb. Sorry I cannot finish. ANONYMOUS

• The following major themes are predominant in the compositions from grades four through five: touching and its connection with sex, shapes and personal tastes, awareness of intimate sexual activity, bragging, teachers and actresses as sex objects, privacy with the opposite sex, and body and breath odor. In these grades, physical contact is purposeful, and sexual overtures become prominent. Body sizes and shapes come into focus. Ann-Margaret and Raquel Welch are symbols of sexuality and pulchritude. Voyeurism is extended from the infantile peeking up skirts to fascination with girlie and nude magazines. Looking up sexual terms in the dictionary and increasing one's sexual vocabulary are frequent activities. Body odors and breath smells become specifically sexual, simultaneously exciting and repelling. Mixed parties without adult supervision and privacy in parties are demanded. Some children begin to develop secondary sexual characteristics which become noticeable.

GRADE SIX

✕ I think that a girl can get pregnant at any age above thirteen because she should know what she is doing if her mother tells her about sex. My father thinks that I should not have a boyfriend. I think that if a girl wants a boy to feel her it is her business not her parents. I think that a girl can kiss a boy at any time, my father thinks I shouldn't. DELILAH

✕ Somedays I see pretty girls walking along the street. They have good ass and a good waist and a good nouck and I will find another sweet ho that suck dick. HAROLD

✕ I think that miniskirts should be worn, but my parents think that miniskirts are temptations for boys. They say that they might rape you if walk with a miniskirt. They put down the hems of your dresses without telling you. I think that sex education should be taught, because if something happens to you, you want to know what's wrong with you. About making the baby, they think, if you learn about it you would immediately go out and get pregnant. They don't let you with boys because

7. LATENCY: FACT OR FICTION?

you'll go to lover's lane and get pregnant. If you ask questions about sex they tell you to mind your business and you'll learn someday.

FEMALE ANONYMOUS

• In grade six there is an increase in factual knowledge in regard to menarche and its implications for pregnancy. There is specific knowledge of the act of intercourse and its possible consequences. Peer values replace parental and traditional values. Permissiveness varies with the group. This particular group asserts that they know all about sex. Masturbation to orgasm is prominent in both boys and girls. There is an increasing awareness of the sex desires and drives. There is a desire to be older so that one may participate in sexual activity. Demands for control over one's body in regard to masturbation and petting are reminiscent of the power struggle with parents about toilet training. The message of these kids is, "This is my body and I will do with it as I please." ✓

CONCLUSIONS

Through the analysis of compositions of children from kindergarten through grade six, this study reveals the presence of overt sexual interest and knowledge. There is a continuing, progressive expansion of social awareness and activities. Even if one is to consider this in the most classical sense, the sexual development in mental activity does not seem to be interrupted or repressed but, in fact, continues to manifest itself blatantly. In consideration of more recent concepts of sexuality, a person's sexuality is considered dependent on three interrelated components: one's sexual identity, one's gender identity, and one's sexual behavior. Evaluating childrens' sexual development by these present-day concepts of sexuality shows again, that progressive psychosexual development continues during years five through twelve.

Cultural factors contribute to the elimination of the latency period. The sexual revolution and freedom in the mass media are sexual enlightenments to children. Movie ratings, titles, advertisements, coming attractions, and songs and records such as "Lay Lady Lay" by Bob Dylan and "Let's Do It in the Road" by the Beatles are sexually blatant. There is an ubiquitous availability on neighborhood newstands and in the grocery and candy stores of soft- and hard-core pornography. Television's relaxed censorship allows overt sexual material during children's prime-time hours. In addition, there is the inability of subcultures to isolate their children because of integration in the school system. Freud studied middle- and upper-middle-class children who were most sheltered. Ghetto children are exposed to the raw essence

of life and do not have the opportunities to be shielded from adult sexuality. Exchange of sexual knowledge crosses the class lines.

By being paradigmatic and catering to the children's adult-established value system in our use of carefully chosen instructions the children were enabled to reveal what they did know, while at the same time denying that they had any right to know it. By avoiding conflict with their value system, the subjects could reveal the extent of their knowledge and experiences. One learns that what the adult world has established is an adult psychic censor that will not admit of children's growth and experience. Selective perception may becloud and avoid awareness of childhood sexuality, but it does not eliminate it.

Many of the productions of the children showed confusion and pain in grasping and dealing with present realities of both themselves and their parents. It would be an act of kindness and love for adults to acknowledge the presence of this awareness and to share with their children the true facts of life so that they may help their children to grow in a healthy manner. Apparently, although many families are unable or unwilling to do this, it has not stopped, now or ever, the generation-to-generation flow of sex knowledge that is whispered, snickered, and fantasied about. Sex education does exist. The only option is whether it should come from adults or peers. By turning one's back on children's needs in this area, one condemns them to doubt, anxiety, fear, and even exploitation. A positive acknowledgment is the only responsible course of action.

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PREADOLESCENT SEXUALITY: LATENT OR MANIFEST?

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PREADOLESCENCE, herein considered to be the ages from 8 through 12, is a period of anticipation—the sexual, psychological, and social changes that begin during these years and mature later are essential to the transition to full adult sexual functioning.

Some aspects of sexual change appear earlier than others, and all may appear at different ages in different individuals. Furthermore, the time and rate of sexual development are not the same for boys and girls. Biological puberty, announced by the beginning of the menarche in girls and by the capacity for ejaculation in boys, and by the development of secondary sex characteristics in both sexes, begins between the ages of 8 and 15. (For detailed information on biological changes during the preadolescent years, see Caplan and Lebovici, 1969; Kinsey, 1953; McCandless, 1967; Douvan and Adelson, 1966; Maccoby, 1966).

Sexual awakening comes to many children during preadolescence. The biological sexual changes—appearance of pubic hair, development of breasts, wet dreams, and so on—can be awesome to the preadolescent, who often is not sure how to react to such phenomena.

The presence of sexual-erotic responses and encounters in preadolescence casts doubt on the universal application of the concept of sexual latency. Other sociological and anthropological research also calls the latency concept into question (Sinha, 1975). The purpose of this chapter is to examine the recognized sexual factors in the life of the preadolescent child in our society, and compare these findings with the traditional concept of the preadolescent years as a time of "suspended sexuality"—the latency period.

EROTIC STIMULI AND RESPONSE IN PREADOLESCENTS

Erection comes on much more quickly in preadolescent boys than it does in adults, although the speed with which climax is reached in preadolescent males varies considerably in different boys, as it does in adult males. In preadolescents, the capacity to achieve repeated orgasms in limited periods of time exceeds the corresponding capacity of teenage boys, who in turn are more capable of repeated orgasms than adults are (Kinsey, 1948).

Ramsey (1943a; 1943b), in studying the erotic responsiveness of nearly 300 boys from an urban school in a middle-sized Midwestern city (the respondents were mostly white, middle-class, and Protestant), asked each boy to rate his response to each item on a list of erotic stimuli. Ramsey found a wide variation in the erotic responsiveness of each individual. The following thirteen items are arranged in declining order based on the items' ratings as stimulants by the group as a whole: sex conversation, female nudity, obscene pictures, motion pictures, daydreaming, burlesque or stage shows, nude art, motion when riding, literature, own body, male nudity, dancing, and music.

About 50 percent of the boys reported erections resulting from some type of nonerotic stimulus, as well. The situation in which nonerotic responses occurred usually involved elements of fear, excitement, or other emotional situations. The items reported as nonerotic stimuli included carnival rides, war motion pictures, being late to school, reciting before class, fast rides, playing a musical solo, band music, fear, or punishment. These responses were most frequently reported for boys aged 10, 11 and 12 years.

MASTURBATION ACTIVITY AND HETEROSEXUAL EXPERIMENTATION IN PREADOLESCENTS

The incidence of masturbation among preadolescent boys of various ages is not precisely known. Ramsey (1943a) summarized five personal-interview studies that, when taken along with his own study, indicate that masturbation occurs at some time in the sexual histories of nearly all males. Three-fourths reported their first experience to have occurred between the ages of 10 and 16. Masturbation apparently begins for the majority of males during the years immediately preceding, or very soon after, puberty; for some, however, it begins during infancy or early childhood. In Ramsey's sample, 14 percent of 8-year-olds reported having had masturbatory experience, 23 percent of 9-year-olds, 29 percent of those 10 years old, 54 percent of those 11 years old, 73 percent of those 12 years old, 85 percent of those 13 years old, 95 percent of those 14 years old, and 98 percent of those 15 years old.

Boys often learn of masturbation from each other. For girls, this is not common (Langfeldt, 1977 [reprinted as Chapter 4 in this volume] and Chapter 6 in this volume).

Masturbation is much more common in preadolescent boys than is heterosexual experience. Even for those who are willing, partners are not easy to come by; masturbating, of course, requires no partner. First experiments with copulation are not unusual between the ages of 10 and 14, however. According to Kinsey (1948), by 12 years of age, approximately one boy in every four or five has at least tried to copulate with a female, and more than 10 percent of preadolescent boys experience their first ejaculation in connection with heterosexual intercourse. Ramsey (1943) reported that about one-third of his sample of middle-class boys had attempted sexual intercourse. Kinsey (1948) indicates that the incidence of heterosexual behavior varies with socio-educational level, being least frequent with preadolescents who eventually go to college and nearly universal among preadolescents who receive no more than a high school education.

Data on overt heterosexual play, including coital play with or without penetration, do not support the notion of a latency period either. Ramsey (1943a) and Kinsey (1948; 1953) show no evidence of striking increase in the incidence of such activity as puberty is reached. Kinsey's data on the active incidence for each year did show that, for boys who later go to college, heterosexual play of all kinds dropped off after about age 10, presumably in response to a redefinition of the meaning of this type of behavior. But, among boys who did not finish high school, there was reportedly little withdrawal, but rather a high level of continuity of heterosexual activity through preadolescence and into adolescence. There are sexual differences, however. Among males a very much larger percentage carried their preadolescent play directly into their adolescent and adult activities than was true of females. The discontinuities between the adolescent and preadolescent activities of the female appear to be the products of social custom and not of anything in the female's biological or psychological makeup.

Perhaps it was because I was approaching the age of puberty, but all of a sudden my parents would not allow me to engage in any of the boy-girl activities.

Thus, the incidence of preadolescent heterosexual sex play at particular ages appears to be highest for girls in the younger years of preadolescence rather than the older. Some eight percent of the females in the Kinsey sample (1953) recalled heterosexual sex play at ages five and seven, but fewer recalled it at later years of preadolescence. Only three percent recalled that they were having sex play just before pu-

bescence. For most, preadolescent play had been restricted to a single experience or to a few stray experiences. Exceedingly few of the girls seemed to have developed any pattern of frequent or regular sex activity. One girl for every seven boys was having heterosexual play near the approach of adolescence; the girls who do accept contacts at that age apparently usually have more than one male partner.

* At each age of preadolescence, prepubertal boys report more sexual activity of every kind than do girls (Broderick, 1966). The marked differences in incidence of heterosexual sex play for boys and girls just prior to puberty may depend in part on the increased restraints that are placed on girls by their parents as the girls approach puberty—restraints that girls often resent, after a carefree childhood (Martinson, 1966).

The preadolescent boy's capacity for specific sexual responses, which develops rapidly as he nears adolescence, is not matched by a similar capacity in the female. The importance of biological over social factors in the incidence differential between preadolescent boys and girls is difficult to measure. Broderick (1966) emphasized social factors; Kinsey placed more emphasis on physical capacity. The male subculture also advocates sexual activity for the male, while the female subculture does not do the same for girls. This factor no doubt affects the higher incidence of sexual experiences among preadolescent boys.

TRENDS IN PREADOLESCENT HETEROSEXUAL MATURATION

It would appear that, in our culture, preadolescence as a period of latency has been overstressed. In societies where children are permitted to do so, they increase rather than decrease their sexual activities during preadolescence. Sexual encounters first include genital autostimulation and mutual masturbation with the same and opposite sex, but with increasing age they are characterized more and more by attempts at heterosexual intercourse. By the time children reach puberty in sexually permissive societies, their expressions of sexuality consist predominantly of the accepted adult form of heterosexual intercourse, and they will continue to follow this pattern throughout their sexually active years of life (Ford and Beach, 1951).

Even in a sexually restrictive society such as ours, children go through stages of heterosexual involvement in relationships that may not be characterized by overtly sexual behavior. In some communities children begin these stages in preadolescence or earlier; in others they may begin at puberty or later. The stages may also take longer or shorter times to complete, depending upon the community and the individual. In preadolescence (if not before), youngsters begin to form

attachments, or "crushes," on persons outside the family. The love feeling is expressed to the other person in a form that depends on the youngster's age, his or her sexual and social maturity, and the permissiveness of the adults who supervise his behavior. It may appear in the form of roughhouse love play (hitting a boy, pulling a girl's hair), writing notes, inviting the other to a party, or simply walking him or her home. If the other person responds to this attention, the two may enter into the first of what often turns out to be a series, through adolescence, of close relationships with peers of the opposite sex. Some are formal and intensive; others are informal and relaxed. Some involve sexual experimentation; others do not. Often the encounter is a part of a specific school setting or occasion, such as a band or play rehearsal, or visits to relatives (where female cousins are a favorite object of attention for boys). There is little doubt that these encounters with varying degrees of emotional involvement influence later attitudes toward love, sex, and the opposite sex. They also provide a set of learning experiences, such as learning how to kiss, how to dance, or how to talk to a person of the opposite sex, as well as how to fondle and caress. The process of learning these skills is often exciting and dramatic, but it also can be painful and embarrassing.

Broderick and Rowe (1968) and Ruppel (1979) report a pyramidally structured set of stages of social heterosexual maturation. This more or less orderly pattern of progression is discernible during the preadolescent years, and success or failure in each step appears to have consequences for more advanced stages of heterosexual development.* The steps or stages in the process of heterosexual development as delineated by Broderick and Rowe are as follows.

1. Desire to marry someone
2. Having a certain girl friend (boy friend)
3. Having been in love
4. Preferring a companion of the opposite sex over one of the same sex or no companion at all, when going to a movie
5. Having begun to date

The foundation, or beginning point, of subsequent progress in heterosexual relations seems to be the child's attitude, when questioned, toward his own future marriage. The most advanced stage for preadolescents is actually going out on a date.

*The Broderick and Rowe sample consisted of 10- to 12-year-olds in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades of ten central Pennsylvania schools, and 312 boys and 298 girls among grades five, six, and seven in four localities including Kansas City and the surrounding area. The Ruppel sample consisted of 256 children 9 to 11 years of age from urban and suburban settings in communities in eastern Iowa.

Each stage is not an absolute prerequisite to the other, but the close nature of the stages' interrelatedness can be indicated by the following set of comparisons: 74 percent of the 10- to 12-year-olds who wanted to get married someday reported having a boyfriend or a girlfriend, but only 34 percent of the others did so; 66 percent of those who reported having a girlfriend or boyfriend also reported having been in love, but only 19 percent of the others did so; 43 percent of those who had been in love said they would prefer a cross-sex companion at the movies, while only 21 percent of the others expressed this preference; and, finally, 32 percent of those who would prefer a companion of the opposite sex had actually gone out on a date, while only 11 percent of the others had done so. Each of these differences was significant beyond the 0.05 level, and the entire series met the criteria of a Guttman scale (Broderick, 1966). The more recent Iowa data indicate an increase in heterosexual interest at all stages in the structure, and the proportion of girls reporting that they have had a date has increased significantly—if we use as evidence comparisons between the Missouri and the Iowa data. This increase in heterosexual interest is compatible with reports of Zelnik and Patner (1979) and Gemme (1979) for other populations.

Broderick (1966) found some racial differences in the pattern of heterosexual development. Questionnaire data were collected from 341 black and 929 white children, 10 through 17 years old, living in an urban industrial community. The most striking difference in sexual development between the races was noted during the preadolescence ages of 10 and 13. At these ages, the white children showed the traditional pattern, with girls far more romantically oriented than boys, although at about the same level in terms of heterosexual interaction. Black boys, however, did not have the heterosexual reserve of the white boys. They were not markedly different from black girls on any item except attitude toward marriage and, in fact, showed a higher level of heterosexual interaction at 12 and 13 than the girls did. This high level of preadolescent heterosexual interest involvement among black boys, together with an apparent early disenchantment with marriage, suggests that the pattern of sociosexual development in the black subculture may differ from that of the white culture.

These recently reported sociological and anthropological data cast doubt on the universal applicability of the concept of preadolescent sexual latency. There has been a change in the attitudes of both boys and girls in the United States toward heterosexual involvement, and in their experiencing of it. In particular, there has been a marked trend toward greater heterosexual experience of preadolescents with their peers. Studies done in the twenties and thirties reported unequivocally

that the percentage of friendship choices that extended across the sex "barrier" dropped to near zero in about the third or fourth grade and remained there through the eighth grade, after which a slight rise was discernible. In 1930, Furfey summarized his careful and systematic observations of boy-girl relations at this age by concluding that girls were rigorously excluded from participation in masculine activities. "The girl, however, does not feel the affront very keenly since she has the same negative attitude toward boys that they have toward her." Furfey noted that from the time boys were age 8 to 11 years old until they reached puberty there was a strong distaste for playing with girls, and only 20 percent of the boys did so. Lehman and Witty (1927) found that from ages 6 to 12 there was a definite tendency for same-sex play, and games at this age frequently were sex-linked. Campbell, in 1939, in describing the typical 12- to 13-year-old girl, wrote, "She would not admit that a certain boy is attractive to her, though she begins to take a covert interest."

This picture of boys generally disinterested in sex and covertly interested girls contrasts with the situation seen in recent decades and apparently continuing. Empirical evidence from the study by Broderick and Fowler (1961) revealed that the majority of children in each primary grade claimed to have a sweetheart, and most of these expected reciprocation. Moreover, the majority of them did not keep their feelings to themselves. That these children did in fact discuss their romances with others is borne out by the ability of their classmates to list the "sweetheart pairs" in their schoolrooms with considerable accuracy, especially in those cases where the relationship was reciprocal or believed by one member to be reciprocal.

Hollingshead, reporting in 1949, stated that the most adventurous youngsters began to date at the age of 12, and that among the 13-year-olds in Elmtown, about 15 percent of the boys and 20 percent of the girls had begun to date. Later studies by Smith (1952), Lowrie (1956), and Cameron and Kenkel (1960) indicate higher incidences of dating at early ages. The 1958 U.S. Office of Education Survey (Lewis, 1958) indicated that in most schools some dating may begin as early as the fourth grade. This national survey, involving data gathered from teachers of fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, supports the observation that in some schools boys and girls do not appear to feel a need to separate from each other during preadolescence. In fact, as early as the fourth grade and continuing through the sixth, they frequently asked for activities such as folk dancing and table games in which both boys and girls could participate. Boys groomed themselves (some beginning in the fourth grade)—carried a comb and used it, washed their hands voluntarily, and occasionally wore a tie. Girls wore lipstick and nail-

polish and groomed their hair. A few children wore "going-steady" rings.

Cross-sex friendship is again demonstrated in the study by Broderick and Fowler (1961). In the fifth grade (10 and 11-year-olds), nearly 45 percent of the boys and 36 percent of the girls claimed to have had dating experience. By the seventh grade (12 and 13-year-olds), nearly 70 percent of the boys and 53 percent of the girls claimed to have had at least one date. Some experience with kissing is common at these ages. There are no comparable data from earlier decades.

When preadolescents were asked, in the Broderick and Fowler study (1961), whom they liked best of all the children they knew (four choices were permitted), the choices across sex lines ranged from 19.7 percent in the fifth grade to 14.6 percent in the seventh grade. Percentages of those who chose at least one of four friends across sex lines give even more dramatic evidence of a new look in boy-girl relations during preadolescence: 51.9 percent of the children in the fifth grade and 37.7 percent of the children in the seventh grade chose one or more friends of the opposite sex. It would seem from this finding that although most boys and girls still prefer the companionship of their own sex, many now are comfortable in bridging this friendship gap between the sexes.

Cross-sex antagonism during preadolescence has been explained as partly due to the efforts of individuals to identify themselves more closely with their own sex and as a result of parents' and others' instilling into children the difference between boys' and girls' roles (Martinson, 1966). These differences are diminishing. In the last generation the sex roles have become more flexible, and they now overlap in many areas. The contents of male and female sets of expectations are becoming more similar as women have achieved many prerogatives previously regarded as exclusively masculine and men have begun to share many traditionally feminine responsibilities. As these roles converge and the experiences and values of the two sexes become more similar, cross-sex hostility is becoming less appropriate, and rejection of the values of the opposite sex is losing much of its purpose. Similarly, as the social status of the two sexes approaches equality, many boys appear to feel less need to defend a shaky claim to superiority.

Some of the most convincing evidence that times have changed also comes from the Broderick and Fowler study (1961). Children were asked to rank the desirability of a companion of the same sex, a companion of the opposite sex, or no companion at all in three different situations: eating, taking a walk, and going to a movie. They could rank the cross-sex companion as first, second, or third choice. In the sixth and seventh grades, the majority of boys and girls reported that when

taking a walk or going to a movie, the companionship of the opposite sex is to be preferred above either of the alternate arrangements. Both sexes were more conservative when choosing an eating companion, but in the seventh grade the proportion preferring the opposite sex rises to nearly one-half.

In the early stages, dating may be entered into primarily because the group expects it (Crist, 1953). A primary group in the form of a gang or clique of a bisexual nature plays an important function in the preparation of the individual for dating by helping to minimize anxieties, fears, frustrations, and shyness. Individuals who make an abrupt change from the one-sex gang to dating, without first having experiences in the heterosexual gang, are prone to find their early dating fraught with uncertainty.

Along with sexual-erotic precocity, there are other social factors that may contribute to bridging the involvement gap between boys and girls that cannot be ruled out as contributing to early involvement. Winick (1968) suggests that the popular mannequin dolls that little girls play with, beginning with Betsy McCall in 1954 and culminating in the popular Barbie, introduced in 1959 and still widely sold, help to prepare the female child for early dating. Barbie is a sexy teenager, and playing with her involves changing costumes and preparing for boy-girl dating relationships, according to Winick. The rehearsal for dating provided by Barbie and her imitators may accelerate the social development of their owners. (By and large, however, dolls sold in the United States are devoid of genitalia, probably contributing to the asexual socialization of children.)

A college student, on reading one of Broderick's articles on the stages of heterosexual development, wrote the following, which tends to corroborate the data presented in this chapter—to wit, that not only is preadolescence not a period of latency, as has been surmised, but also that boy-girl relationships are often quite sexual and erotic.*

*As I recall, this was a period of great experimentation, exposure, and discussion of sex. Elaborate games, which we thought disguised our motives quite well, were created in order that we might expose ourselves in what seemed to us a permissible manner. The fourth grade was characterized by serious boy-girl relationships in which "making out" was a vital component. In the fifth and sixth grade the boys my age were getting their thrills, much to the horror of us girls, by taking pictures of each other experiencing an erection. The longer I spend recalling attitudes, conversations, and actions of the six through twelve age group, which is supposedly the latency period, the more convinced I am that Freud was at least somewhat astray on this aspect of his theory.

*Case from the author's files.

So we can conclude that preadolescence as a period of latency has been overstressed. Even in a sexually restrictive society such as ours, children go through stages of heterosexual involvement both in fantasy and in actuality. Sexual awakening, the beginning awareness of the self as a sexual being and of the opposite sex as potential affectional and erotic partners, is very real for many preadolescents.

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9

THE DELAY OF NORMAL PSYCHOSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

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IN differentiating two concepts of "normality," I shall try to separate out, in very broad terms, what kind of adolescent sexuality may normally be expectable for the species—that is, truly phase-specific—and what kind may be considered normal only in the setting of our own United States middle-class culture—that is, phase-appropriate only in this limited cultural and historical context.

The terms *puberty* and *adolescence* are not used consistently in the literature. In this paper I use *puberty* to mean the pan-human spurt of biological maturation that culminates in reproductive capacity and an adult body. *Adolescence* is defined as the individual and societal response to puberty. Thus, puberty is a universal biological characteristic of *Homo sapiens*, whereas adolescence is both individually and culturally variable.

I do not wish entirely to beg the question whether or not adolescence is itself a universal stage of development, but neither do I wish to address it in detail. I would point out only that there is ethnological evidence that despite the enormous range of reported cultural variations, nowhere is puberty ignored. The universality of the mother/son incest taboo, and the universality of the requirement that for every adolescent the eventual family of procreation must be different from the family of origin, are evidence that every culture undertakes to channel and limit postpubescent sexual expression—a fact that cannot escape

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the young person's awareness. Thus, I proceed upon the premise that some form of sexual adolescence is an inevitable human experience (Gadpaille, 1975a).

* If there is one principle upon which students of dynamic psychology are in agreement, it is that sexuality does not begin at puberty; rather, puberty triggers a sexuality that is shaped by prior learning and emotionally reinforced experiences. The role of postnatal influences on psychosexual development is well accepted. Conversely, however, the issue of innate psychosexual predisposition is not at all a matter of general consensus, yet it cannot be ignored in any comprehensive consideration of what is ultimately normal in adolescence.

There are voluminous data bearing upon this matter. They derive from clinical and neuroendocrinological studies of humans, and from experimental investigations of subhuman primates and of other mammalian species. These data are summarized in a number of extensive overview articles and books (Diamond, 1965; Gadpaille, 1972; Money and Ehrhardt, 1972; Reinisch, 1974), and support the thesis that the biologically normal human infant is born with an innate psychosexual bias. This bias appears to be related to the organizing influence on the fetal hypothalamus of the presence or absence of fetal gonadal androgens during the sixth to the 12th week of fetal development. This thesis is in no way meant to question or to contradict the enormous plasticity of such biological predisposition, or the preponderant influence of postnatal experiences in the establishment of core gender identity, which is equally well documented (Hampson and Hampson, 1961; Money and Ehrhardt, 1972). But the innate predisposition demonstrably influences the expression of some few characteristics that are considered masculine or feminine, and, more to the point of this chapter, it influences adult sexual object preference.

Harris (1964) characterizes the import of these data most simply by pointing out that without exception in normal mammalian species it is easier to arouse a sexual response to a member of the opposite sex than to one of the same sex. There are no known mammalian species of human cultures in which preferential adult heterosexuality is not the norm (Ford and Beach, 1951). This is not meant to imply that any particular paraphilia, as, for example, homosexuality, is an illness in the medical sense, nor that sexual activity involving nonheterosexual partners or objects is unnatural. The data do, however, specifically demonstrate that adult preferential heterosexuality is an innate biological norm. This norm can be rendered distasteful or inaccessible by a child's learning experiences and role models, but, as Stoller (1968) has indicated, it requires quite specific and *unnatural* rearing pressures to deflect biology when there are no biological ambiguities.

HUMAN-SPECIFIC SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Since culture is a characteristic of our species, there is no possibility of studying adolescent sexuality unaffected by a specific culture. But there are societies which leave children to their own devices sexually. In these the adults neither foster institutionally any particular expression of childhood sexuality, nor do they discourage any spontaneous sexual behavior or exclude children from gaining complete knowledge about adult sexual behavior.* Obviously, no culture can fail to provide at least subtle cues about what it approves or disapproves; so one can take technical exception to the citing of those reared in permissive cultures as sexually "natural" children. Nonetheless, children of such cultures probably come as close as any about which data exist in exemplifying natural psychosexual development and its consequences.

The ethnological data are remarkably uniform. From infancy, the children are free to observe nudity and adult sexual activity. Their own activity begins with the earliest of genital fondling and proceeds eventually to include every kind of sexual behavior—masturbation; homosexual, heterosexual, and group sex play; and intercourse.

* In the societies where they are permitted to do so, children gradually increase their sexual activities both as they approach puberty and during adolescence . . . their sex play first includes autogenital stimulation and mutual masturbation with the same and opposite sex, but with increasing age it is characterized more and more by attempts at heterosexual copulation. By the time of puberty in most of these societies expressions of sexuality on the part of older children consist predominantly of the accepted adult form of heterosexual intercourse, the pattern which they will continue to follow throughout their sexually active years of life (Ford and Beach, 1951, p. 190).

From this and from such first-hand field descriptions as were cited, a number of observations may be made. There is no evidence in support of a biologically determined sexual latency in the sense of an actual diminution of the sexual drive between the time of the oedipal period and prepuberty. During the childhood period of sex play and experimentation there is initially little indication of object preference, but this polymorphous ambisexuality gradually and routinely gives

*Ford and Beach (1951, p. 188f.) list fifteen societies in which both forms of childhood sexual freedom exist. In discussing the functional significance of early sex play for both humans and subhuman primates, they reach conclusions similar to mine. Money and Ehrhardt (1972, pp. 132-145) discuss four such societies, in two of which even a period of institutionalized homosexuality in adolescence does not disrupt the preparation for adult heterosexual function that appears to be related to early childhood sex play. A more extensive description of one such culture, the Pilagia Indians of South America, may be found in Henry (1949) and Henry and Henry (1944).

way to heterosexuality. (This kind of sexual childhood is quite analogous to the juvenile stage in subhuman primates and other mammalian species.) The omnipresence of nudity and of the primal scene does not introduce demonstrable inhibitions or distortions in the capacity of these children for adult heterosexual function. And their ego development is such that they are ready to cope with the demands of heterosexual intercourse and relationships by the time puberty makes adult sexuality available to them.

The outcome of this kind of natural psychosexual experience, within the context of these societies, is also interesting. Again, ethnological evidence suggests that the capacity for enjoyable heterosexual intercourse is enhanced in societies permissive toward childhood sexuality (Ford and Beach, 1951, pp. 188-198). This accords well both with the finding of Kinsey et al. (1953, pp. 385-391) that the occurrence and frequency of orgasm before marriage correlates positively with orgasmic capacity and frequency in marriage, and with those of the Harlows (1962) that among rhesus monkeys the deprivation of juvenile sex play is more crippling to adult sexual function than the deprivation of mothering. Also, there is evidence that such childhood experiences decrease or eliminate the development of paraphilias (Money and Ehrhardt, 1972, pp. 132-145). While there is great theoretical and clinical concern in psychoanalysis that ego development and the capacity for sublimation and object relations will be grossly impaired by exposure to parental nudity and to the primal scene and by unrestrained child and adolescent sexuality, there is no evidence that the members of the permissive societies referred to are rendered unequal to whatever maturation their cultures demand of them in those spheres of psychological function. That is to say, their freedom of sexual expression and curiosity in childhood is consistent with successful adult heterosexual relationships and constructive social participation as defined in their cultures.

Of course, the differences in ego development and interpersonal maturity required for successful function in different cultures urge great caution in extrapolation from less complex to more complex cultures; the hypothesis to be presented in this chapter is proposed with full cognizance that far more data than are presented here will be necessary to validate, modify, or invalidate it. But one cannot validly make the direct correlation implied in psychoanalytic-developmental theory, and specifically proposed by the anthropologist Unwin (1935), that the capacity for intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural achievement is directly related to the repression and sublimation of free sexuality; some of the simplest preliterate societies are among some of the most severely sexually repressive (Ford and Beach, 1951, pp. 180-184). The converse is

also true. Child-rearing in Israeli kibbutzim is totally sexually permissive (Shepher, 1971), and Israeli culture is as demanding as any in the complexity of ego development necessary for full participation. A further parallel provided by the kibbutz experience is the paucity of adult preferential homosexuality reported among those so reared (Prywes, 1960; Rapaport, 1958; Bettelheim, 1969).

I shall take, therefore, the provisional position that children reared as I have described represent a relatively uncomplicated prototype of human psychosexual development, a reasonable approximation of the species norm. When, in their cultures, puberty does not bring the sudden imposition of new strictures upon them, their adolescent sexuality is remarkably untroubled. Their bodily changes, coupled with their hormonally induced higher sex drive, may produce a repeat phase of same-sex curiosity and exploration. But this curiosity has already largely been satisfied during childhood; they were free to become accustomed to mature bodies as well as to immature ones. As already cited, they move smoothly into preferential heterosexual intercourse. Thus their adolescence is absorbed with learning about and integrating those aspects of sexuality that could not have been learned earlier, such as the experience of sexual activities with a sexually mature body and partners, the movement into adult sex identities and relationships, and the various sociosexual limitations imposed by the prevailing incest and kinship taboos.

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

United States middle-class culture is quite different. I grant immediately that there are enormous variations within that vast group, that exceptions exist to any conceivable generalization, and that any generalizations may scarcely apply to the numerous subcultural groups. Nevertheless, there are broad homogeneities in sexual attitudes and child-rearing philosophies, and there are important similarities in the sex-related experiences of the majority of children and adolescents.

* There is very little that is truly characteristic of our cultural institutions that constructively and actively prepares a child for the pubertal intensification of sexual feelings. This reflects the culture's continued posture of sexually repressive and prohibitive value systems. It is inaccurate to misperceive the publicity given to various manifestations of sexual permissiveness as proof of a major shift in the culture's official morality. The most recent large surveys of representative population samples reveal the durability of our traditional sexually prohibitive attitudes (Levitt and Klassen, 1973; Alston and Tucker, 1973). Whether or not such a shift will occur in the near future is not certain, though

that is the direction of the indicators of change that have been documented; and whatever controversial movement in that direction now exists, it is more likely to affect adolescents adversely due to its reflection of cultural instability, rather than to free the average adolescent from the traditional restrictions.

During childhood, it remains true that the specific and overtly sexual sources of ego development with respect particularly to coping with the sexual consequences of puberty are largely tabooed. Unstructured modes of realistic learning are few. Unselfconscious parental nudity is still uncommon. Opportunities to learn about adult heterosexual behavior through observation are very rare. And because of predominant adult attitudes of secrecy, shame, and embarrassment, inadvertent observation will more likely confirm negative concepts of sexuality in the child than provide reassurance and constructive education. Childhood sex play, either alone or with others, is usually sharply discouraged.

Structured or formal modes of learning are similarly unavailable or negative. Deliberate sex education of an open and fully informative sort, either at home or in school for young children, is the exception rather than the rule. Instead, adults tend either to provide children with no sexual vocabulary or information, or to mislabel and falsely label expressions of sexuality. Correctly defined words are necessary tools for the development of concepts and cognitive categories congruent with reality. Their absence, or the presence of purposely vague or falsely defined words, leaves a child crippled. He is prey to misinformation and fantasy because he lacks access to the means for reality testing, and he learns to keep sexuality secret, especially from those he loves (Gagnon, 1965). *

Activities associated with future heterosexuality are more stringently tabooed than those associated with homosexuality; this occurs more by default than by intention. For whatever reasons, adults rarely spontaneously voice explicit prohibitions against sex play among same-sex peers; typically, they do so only when they become aware of homoerotic play. On the other hand, the ideas of naughtiness and badness regarding sex play between girls and boys are fully explicit. This differential emphasis may be because adults are more likely to expect a "natural" desire for heterosexual, but not homoerotic, play among children. Opportunities for heterosexual play are those that are most carefully guarded against. Few parents object to their children having friends of the same sex over to spend the night or the weekend; this is a frequent and typical childhood experience. Not so with friends of the opposite sex; most people cannot recall an instance of an opposite-sex friend being allowed to spend the night and share the same room and the same bed. A result is that prohibitions against homoerotic behavior

seldom become part of the superego. The childhood superego is made up essentially of parental prohibitions. This remains the primitive core of the later conscience, and therefore internalized guilt attaches primarily to heterosexual activity. Shame will come eventually to be associated with homoerotic expressions when the young person becomes aware of the cultural disapproval. But shame and guilt are not equally internalized; their mechanisms for and their strengths in determining behavior under various circumstances are quite different.

A common thread that runs through this discussion and one that has long been recognized, is that this culture, through its child-rearing practices, both emphasizes and creates discontinuities rather than continuities between childhood and adulthood (Benedict, 1950). It erects norms and expectations that define acceptable function and behavior as a child, and which often must be changed drastically or even completely reversed in order to achieve appropriate and healthy function as an adult. In consequence of the influences I have briefly sketched, the average, typical child arrives at adolescence without the ego readiness to cope with the pubertal surge of sexual awakening and, more specifically, with the heterosexual implications of puberty. He is also clearly given to understand that heterosexual intercourse should still be postponed indefinitely into the future. The adolescent must effect preparation for and progress toward healthy adult sexuality during the height of his sexual drive and under conditions of continuing heterosexual prohibition. Since every adolescent can only do the best he can with what he has, these conditions shape what must be considered normal adolescent sexual behavior, in the sense of that which is phase-appropriate within the given conditions.

Some degree, often a very great deal, of guilt and anxiety must therefore be regarded as normal. Emotional retreat from the biological impulses, and a wide gamut of defenses against emotions, thoughts, and urges that one has learned to consider unacceptable, are normally expectable. Such negative emotional responses will surround most internal or overt expressions of sexuality, their power depending upon the individual adolescent's interaction with his specific childhood rearing experiences and upon the varying degrees of emphasis that had been placed upon particular aspects of sexuality. Those that had been most explicitly tabooed, typically masturbation and heterosexual behavior, will be the most difficult with which to come to terms and be emotionally comfortable.

Children in middle-class society often find it relatively easy to suppress or repress most of their overt sexuality. What both torments and at the same time saves the adolescent is that puberty renders sexuality well-nigh imperative. Only the most guilt-ridden and inhibited manage

to control their sexuality totally and thus continue to live up to the cultural definition of good children; the rest must yield to the need for some outlet.

Freud (1905) first pointed out that the sexual instinct and the sexual object are largely independent of one another. The sexual drive expresses a biological pressure toward the release of sexual tension or the gratification of sexual desire, and various modes of release may be utilized under different conditions. The nerve endings in the genitals are capable of being excited to the point of pleasure and orgasm by entirely nonspecific stimulation; innumerable forms and agents of touch, pressure, and friction can produce a sexual response. For adolescents, the need for release is often more pressing than the direction or object of that release, even if that object involves transgression of known social sanctions. This is exemplified by the use of animals for sexual release by rural boys and by urban boys visiting rural areas, when they are largely isolated from close contact and sexual opportunities with peers of either sex (Kinsey et al., 1948, pp. 667-678).

It is inevitable that homoerotic activity would be a normal adolescent experience in this culture. Limited in the ambisexual explorations of childhood, the opportunities for learning heterosexual self-confidence have been partially narrowed. Burdened with guilt that weighs most heavily upon self-exploration and heterosexual experimentation, early adolescents frequently feel most free to express their newly intense sexual feelings with those around whom they feel most comfortable—their same-sex peers. Such sexuality is certainly not entirely guilt-free, especially the masturbatory aspects; it is simply that for many adolescents this is the sexual arena that is least anxiety-producing and least hedged about with taboos. And in these peer groups much that was missed in childhood, as well as much that is new about puberty, may be accomplished.

Homoerotic experience motivated and undertaken for such intrapsychic purposes as described is not considered prognostically significant and should not be confused with preferential homosexuality. Such homoerotic activity is actually utilized in the service of heterosexual maturation, much as it is in the childhood experiences in permissive societies. There is, of course, no implication that every normal adolescent will or must have had homoerotic experience in order to be healthy. There are other ways of juggling successfully the urges and prohibitions and expectations thrust upon one at adolescence in a culture such as this. It is but one of the means, appropriately responsive to all the realities of the average childhood and adolescence in our culture, which the healthy ego can use to help achieve heterosexual func-

tion. But because of these realities, a period of homoerotic activity is phase-appropriate.

It does not seem equally valid, however, to ascribe the development of preferential homosexuality to the influence of the culture at large; and it cannot be considered a biological norm in any culture or a behavioral norm in this. Cultural attitudes must, of course, be implicated in the massive obstacles they impose on the path of normal heterosexual development. Preferential homosexuality is but one adaptation to early influences that blunt or deflect psychosexual development from its innate biological course. Indeed, were it not for the wholly inappropriate social and legal discriminations which persons of a homosexual bent are forced to endure, preferential homosexuality might well constitute only a minor consequence when compared with the far wider incidence of intrapsychic suffering and interpersonal distortions and abuses of sexuality among those who retain their heterosexual orientation.

SEXUAL FUNCTION AND THE ONSET OF HETEROSEXUAL ACTIVITY

Because of the cultural influences described, the ability of a demonstrable proportion of middle-class adolescents to achieve early healthy heterosexual function despite the ubiquitous cultural impediments is more compelling of theoretical attention, in my view, than is the delay in achieving heterosexual function, the incidence of damaging sexual conflict, or the frequency of homoerotic activity. Clinical attention has been so focused upon sexually troubled and dysfunctional adolescents that a formidable theoretical literature has grown up concerning the repercussions in other areas of ego function that have been ascribed to the pathogenesis of early heterosexual activity (for literature survey, see Gadpaille, 1975b). So accustomed are we to the "normality" of culturally induced pathology, that there is wide consensus in the psychodynamic literature that unless full heterosexual gratification is delayed and postponed through most of adolescence, ego development, object relations, and the capacity for sublimation will be severely impaired. Little or no attention of comparably intense intrapsychic investigation has been paid to that segment of sexually active and untroubled adolescents who never come to clinical notice, and psychoanalytic developmental theory seems to me to have evolved without integrating a knowledgeable awareness of their existence.

In a recent study of adolescent sexuality, Sorensen (1973) made an effort to categorize the various patterns of adolescent sexual behavior,

and to study the self-assessed characteristics of adolescents displaying the different patterns. Most of the patterns, from sexual inactivity to sexual anarchy, hold few surprises; the youngsters involved and their expressed attitudes and emotions are quite familiar. The descriptions of them, and their descriptions of themselves, most frequently reveal their ego unpreparedness and their particular efforts to deal with that. Only one group is of special interest in the context of this paper.

Those whom Sorensen calls serial monogamists without marriage comprised 21% of his sample.* These are adolescents who are heterosexually active, but with one partner only, with whom they are deeply involved. They may have had other previous partners, but they are distinguished in terms of sexual behavior by the stability and monogamous nature of their attachments. Their other characteristics are particularly arresting. Half have been together for a year or more, and most feel love for and loved by their partners. Typically, they wish for some greater rapprochement with their parents about their sex lives. Most of them are 16 years or older. Of the girls, 51% are usually or always orgasmic, compared with only 29% of all other categories of female nonvirgins. Far more of these couples (66%) always use contraceptives than do those with unstable sex lives, whom Sorensen calls sexual adventurers (46%). They have more frequent sex than even the adventurers, and are more openly satisfied with their sex lives. As a group, they maintain the highest school-grade average of any group of adolescents, including those who show no outward interest in sex.

Serial monogamists thus appear to be the healthiest group when evaluated in the area of ego development, which their sexual activity is theoretically supposed to endanger most. While most of them are 16 or older, indicating an expectable progression to this quality of heterosexuality, the mature characteristics apply equally well to those who are quite young. Rather than being crippled in their nonsexual ego developmental tasks, they give evidence of being generally more effective, more responsible, and more healthily object-related than do the other major categories. It is of interest both that such adolescents exist in demonstrable proportion and, conversely, that they are such a minority.

This comparison of the two kinds of normality leads me to offer the

*The accuracy and representativeness of Sorensen's statistics are not at issue in this presentation. They have been questioned, whether substantively or not, by some researchers, most of whom argue that the proportion of adolescents who would fit the characteristics of this category, as he describes them, is less than 21%. Most sharply, they stand in contrast with Offer's (1968) widely known study of modal adolescents, which I have reviewed in the context of intrapsychic and ego development criteria (Gadpaille, 1975b). I mean here only to call attention to the fact that adolescents of the type described do exist, albeit as a distinct minority.

hypothesis that sexual adolescence in the United States middle class is a form of pathologically delayed childhood. Despite the enormous differences between humans and other mammals, *Homo sapiens* is still a mammal. It is more predictable than surprising that the exploratory polymorphous and ambisexual nature of the juvenile period of normal mammalian development should also be characteristic of human childhood. Evidence derived from permissive societies is presented in support of this concept. Also analogous to other higher mammalian species, the opportunity for unimpeded childhood sex play and the acquisition of complete and realistic sex knowledge appears to prepare the child to cope with the sexual implications of puberty with minimal conflict, sexual dysfunction, or failures of satisfying heterosexual function. Traditionally, our culture has systematically withheld from children those developmental experiences that would allow that ego development necessary for relatively untroubled acceptance of the biological changes of puberty and of postpubertal heterosexuality. As a corollary to this hypothesis, I suggest that most middle-class adolescents must accomplish during adolescence what the normal human animal would naturally have accomplished in childhood.

Further, this constitutes, unfortunately, not merely a delay. There are critical periods for accomplishing various increments of psychological development, and, if this hypothesis has validity, adolescence is neither the natural nor the optimal period for some of the components of psychosexual development that are displaced into it by our cultural practices. The suddenly intensified sexual drive and a markedly changed body to incorporate into one's body image constitute a normal stress. When ego development falls short of optimal preparation for an expectable stress, an increased incidence of developmental casualties of all kinds will result. There will not only be failures, distortions, regressions, and maladaptive solutions in the sexual sphere; in addition, because there are further refinements in sexual identity and also other crucial increments of ego development for which adolescence is the critical period in so complex a culture as ours, these, too, can be compromised by preoccupation with sexual conflicts. Pathologically delayed childhood exacts the price of further pathology, and our consulting rooms and mushrooming sex therapy clinics bear daily witness that the price is being paid.

This hypothesis is presented not as demonstrable truth, but in the hope of stimulating research that can strengthen, modify, or invalidate it. Followed to its logical end, it speaks for a major cultural change that would have unknown repercussions in every aspect of society—an unrealistic goal even if it were desirable. The desirability itself would be highly questionable to many people. The conviction that the limitation

of childhood and adolescent sexuality serves real and valuable individual and social ends is firmly held by many serious and knowledgeable students of psychosexual development. But the existence of a minority of sexually active early adolescents who are also more emotionally mature than most of their peers means that one cannot take that theoretical position for granted.

Such a group of youngsters is a virtually untapped research population. They appear to have managed somehow to grow up in this culture, and yet they have the ego development necessary to cope optimally with pubertal sexuality—but how? It is easy to note that parents and families and neighborhood subcultures are so endlessly variable under the broad umbrella of middle-class culture that they could easily have had the kind of personal and individual developmental experiences that would foster optimum ego strength. While probably true, that answers none of the crucial questions. Neither they nor their parents, nor their parents' parents in all likelihood, grew up *outside* the culture, and the manifestations of those cultural attitudes under discussion are ubiquitous and pervasive. Precisely what kinds of parental influences gave them their advantages? How were these influences mediated? Under what life conditions? At what period of development? Do individual genetic or constitutional variables play any role?

If it can be shown that the apparent psychosexual maturity of these youngsters is genuine, it is reasonable to want to know how to foster that quality of development for the majority. Practically nothing is known about the dynamics of such development. It would benefit analytic theory, therapeutic endeavors, and ultimately the society and its members, were we to devote the same exquisite care and attention to these adolescents as we do to the inner dynamics of disturbed adolescents. The psychoanalytic microscope might perhaps be used preventively as well as therapeutically. It is a prime area for psychoanalytic and sociosexual research.

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IV

SEX

IN THE

FAMILY

INCEST has long been, if not an obsession, then a frequent preoccupation of social scientists and theorists. It is not of necessity a subject linked with childhood sexuality, but when it is so linked, another dimension of controversy and concern is added. Chapter 10 opens with a conceptual overview of incest involving children. The authors draw upon and organize extensive clinical experience and prior research to show that incest is not a unitary phenomenon but instead takes many forms, each of which must be understood in its own right. Their typology is useful to keep in mind when reading the remaining three chapters in this section, which report innovative research into incest among people who are neither criminals nor patients. In Chapter 11, Finkelhor examines incest between siblings with data selected from a larger study of sex and aggression among college students. Symonds and colleagues, in Chapter 12, test the hypothesis that the taboo against speaking of incest can be stronger than the taboo against incest itself. Finally, in Chapter 13, Nelson investigates factors relating to positive versus negative evaluations of incest experiences when the population being studied is not preselected to yield one or the other.

10
SEXUAL ABUSE
OF CHILDREN:
A CLINICAL SPECTRUM

ROLAND SUMMIT
JOANN KRYSO

HOUSEHOLD sex education, sexualized play, incest, child molestation, and ritual sexual exploitation are all aspects of an interest of adults in the sexuality of children. On one end of the spectrum, there is a presumably altruistic dedication to sharing with a child the benefit of adult awareness and experiences toward the goal of eventual sexual fulfillment. On the other end, adults who teach and demonstrate sexuality to children for the goal of immediate gratification are condemned as criminals. Snuggling with children under the covers on a cold Sunday morning can be one of the great joys of family living. A woman may remember fondly the warmth and strength of her father's body against her, while another recalls with guilt and loathing the intrusion of unwanted paternal intimacies. The objective distinctions between loving support and lustful intrusion are disquietingly subtle.

Some people, uncomfortable with subtleties, attempt to deny and prohibit any hint of sensual outreach toward children. Others, oblivious to the subtleties, exhort parents to bring their children into the bathroom and bedroom to dispel the secrecy and guilt traditionally associated with sex. Most parents find themselves somewhere in the middle, a little discontent with traditional prohibitions but suspicious of radical change. When common sense and intuition break down,

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these parents seek guidance from magazines, minister, and mental health professionals.

Unfortunately, there is little professional agreement about models of optimal childhood sexual development or family interaction. There is even less accord concerning pathological variants. Conceptual models tend to be drawn from psychoanalytic theory, with a curious paradox; for all the pivotal importance of concepts of incest in the foundation of psychodynamic theory, and for all the continuing fascination with incestuous fantasies, there seems to be a deliberate reluctance to confront incest as a real event.* In the legacy of Freud's pioneering studies, therapists have tended to focus attention on the child's wish for the parent and the difficulties of resolving fantasized oedipal conflicts. Recollections of parental sexual intrusions, whatever their reality base, have tended to be interpreted as stereotypic fantasies (Peters, 1976). For all the emphasis on the primal scene and the myth of Oedipus, there has been little research or training in the practical management of the family romance.

The psychiatric literature prior to about 1960 viewed incest as an exotic, virtually negligible phenomenon taking place between retarded, seductive girls and inadequate, sociopathic fathers. Cormier (1962) portrayed a more human, everyday picture of incest and introduced the probability that the incidence of incest vastly exceeded reported figures. Reliable incidence figures and statistically relevant data on prognosis have yet to emerge.

Reported cases of child sexual molestation are only the visible fraction of a much larger problem. In a retrospective survey of 1200 college-age females, 26% reported a sexual experience with an adult prior to age thirteen. Only six percent of these incidents had been reported to authorities (Gagnon, 1965). The American Humane Association (1972) estimates 200,000 to 300,000 cases of female child molestation in the United States per year, with at least 5000 cases of father-daughter incest. In communities where active efforts are made to invite referral and treatment of sexual problems, the response has exceeded these estimates. The Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Project in San Jose, California, has experienced an explosive increase of referrals and self-re-

*Freud's own deliberations on the importance of incest offer an interesting historical footnote. After hearing anamnestic accounts of incest from several women with hysteria, Freud theorized that incest was the psychic trauma responsible for the neurosis. Further analysis indicated the incestuous experiences were fantasies derived from the needs of the patients, rather than trauma inflicted from the outside. Freud felt devastated at the repudiation of his theory, and considered abandoning the analytic approach altogether. The salvation of psychoanalysis came with Freud's epic decision that children construct their own traumatic fantasies as their instinctual needs conflict with outer events. In effect, whether the incest happened or not was immaterial (Ekstein, 1977).

referrals, to a present annual incidence of 165 father-daughter incest cases per million (Giaretto, 1976a), which would project to some 36,000 cases nationally.

We are convinced that incest is a specific variant of child abuse with identifiable antecedents and predictable consequences. We are also impressed that incest itself is a symptom common to a diversity of parental conflicts, and that a classification of that diversity is required to achieve a differential specificity of management and prognosis. In this paper, we shall attempt to classify the spectrum of parent-child sexual behavior patterns as a practical guide to understanding and working with the human side of sexual abuse.

Input for this paper is drawn from a wide base of sources encountered during an eleven-year span of psychiatric community consultation. Our experience includes hundreds of consultations with protective service workers and law enforcement personnel concerning sexually abusive families as well as direct contact with dozens of patients referred for evaluation and treatment of sexual abuse. Individuals otherwise invisible to clinical attention have shared with us their concerns about sexual aspects of parenting in parent education classes, professional training courses, public audiences, and women's awareness groups. In addition, we have had extensive contacts within Parents Anonymous (Lieber and Baker, 1977) with members who have been very frank in discussing a wide range of problems in parenting.

INCEST AND CHILD ABUSE

Almost every society in history has had a taboo against incest (Henderson, 1972). People tend to assume that the incest taboo is a natural outgrowth of human decency, and that sex with offspring is unnatural and inherently repugnant. However, the taboo may have evolved for quite the opposite reason: as a practical defense against a very natural experience. People who live together, who depend on each other for love and support, and who have intimate daily contact with each other will tend to develop sexual relationships with each other. Children respond gladly with their whole bodies to loving contact. They want to be treated by their parents as something special, and the sharing of sexual feelings could be very exciting. The parent bears the entire responsibility to define and maintain appropriate limits of intimacy. For many parents, a mythic taboo alone fails to guarantee that responsibility. *

There are two general characteristics common to those who sexually abuse their children. It is these two problems, rather than the quality of sexual attraction, that separate the abusers from the more moderate parents. One problem is a lack of impulse control. This may be as a

result of transient stress or it may be characteristic of the individual. The second problem is a confusion of roles. The child is regarded at times as something other than a child, or as a surrogate of someone else. The child becomes an object for the needs of the adult without adequate recognition of the inappropriateness or inadequacy of the child to meet these needs.

* These two dynamics, the lack of impulse control and the confusion of roles, are common not only to sexual abuse but also to child abuse in general. All parents get angry with their children. All parents have sensuous feelings toward their children. The abusing parent acts on those feelings in a less controlled way and expects of the child an adult level of performance and a quality of devotion and gratification that no child can fulfill.

Just as there is a shifting and invisible line between constructive discipline and dehumanizing punishment, there is a vague borderline between loving sensuality and abusive sexuality. We propose to clarify this borderline with a progression of categories of sexual involvement showing an increase in apparent individual and social harmfulness. At one end of the spectrum are behaviors that most would identify as variations of normal behavior. At the other extreme are the more bizarre and apparently malicious aspects that most would agree are clearly criminal and demanding of aggressive intervention.

THE SPECTRUM OF PARENT-CHILD SEXUALITY

INCIDENTAL SEXUAL CONTACT

This first category of sexual involvement consists of parents' attempts to cope indirectly with erotic interest or dependency needs toward their children. The response is controlled and self-limiting, often without much understanding of the erotic or dependent basis for the behavior. Sometimes control is excessive, as a parent tries to deny or undo an unacceptable feeling.

For example, several mothers have told us of their erotic or orgasmic response to breast feeding. One woman welcomed an unexpected bonus of motherhood. Another woman could not reconcile any erotic response with her concept of the mother role; she never nursed a child again and tried not to think about the experience, let alone confide in anyone for help.

* Curiosity provokes various kinds of sexual exploration. Mothers may touch the penis of an infant to test its response and may be intrigued by the phenomenon of infantile erection. Some women report feeling very guilty about this, even years after an isolated experience. A father

may feel curious to see or feel the "private parts" of his daughter. A male single parent may feel guilty even about bathing his daughters.

Sexual tension may be diverted into games involving teasing, mock spankings, and wrestling. One mother reported an after-bath game of "gotcha" in which she would grab for the penis of her six-year-old while he gleefully jumped to avoid her.

* A less genital but more potentially harmful behavior is the tendency of some single mothers to sleep with a child, usually the oldest one. Both mother and son seek comfort in the loss of the father and neither seems able to sleep comfortably without the other. The boy may sleep with his mother to age ten or twelve. The mother denies any erotic potential in the absence of genital contact or arousal. She overlooks how stimulating the body contact is to the child and how it prolongs sensual dependency on the mother. The boy tends to remain excessively attached to his mother and to have difficulties later on with adult sexual object choice. This situation presents an excellent opportunity for preventive casework; most such mothers respond well to informed questioning and brief counseling.

As children approach adolescence they provoke a more characteristically adult sexual response. Adolescent girls describe two kinds of overreaction by their fathers. One is withdrawal behavior, in which the father is so threatened by this potential attraction that he stops holding or touching his daughter and becomes visibly threatened by any contact with her. The other reaction is overtly seductive or self-gratifying. There may be lingual kissing, exploration of breasts, and other frankly erotic intrusions, all in the guise of "fatherly love." In a family where communication is open, a girl will often register her distress to her father or to her mother. Perceptive parents will appreciate the impact of this misguided affection and bring it under control. Exploratory behavior becomes a more serious problem if family trust and communication are already impaired, as we will examine in a later classification.

Another incidental response to adolescence is household voyeurism. Men may station themselves around corners with mirrors or outside of slightly open doors to watch their daughters undress. They are content that this has no impact on their daughters because they are sure their daughters are not aware of it. The girls report otherwise, usually with a strong sense of disillusionment and distress. *dis-dress*

These behaviors have an emotional significance in the development of the child, but they fall outside of the usual definition of sexual abuse. They are enumerated here for two reasons: to illustrate a spectrum of behavior and to alert professionals to areas to explore as people seek help with vague complaints about changes in parental rela-

tionships. One must listen carefully to adolescents who come in and vaguely say, "I'm not getting along well with my folks any more; dad isn't the same as he used to be."

IDEOLOGICAL SEXUAL CONTACT

Certain parents may encourage specifically sexual activity in the belief that increased sexual expression is beneficial for the child. Potential arousal, anxiety, or guilt are sublimated through idealization and rationalization by parents who are sometimes strikingly naive about consequences for the child:

* A mother in a parent-education class expressed concern when she encountered her five-year-old son attempting intercourse with his female playmate. A few questions from the instructor illustrated that the boy and his friend were stimulated by their habitual perusal of *Penthouse* magazine, which the parents felt should not be hidden away. The boy's sexual interests were further piqued by the mother's pleasure in sharing afternoon showers with him. The mother's obvious pregnancy also aggravated potential oedipal conflicts, as indicated by the child's question, "Mommy, when Daddy did it to you before I was born, did he do it in bed or was it here in the shower?"

In search for an appropriate expression of modern sexual values, these parents had unknowingly stimulated more sexual curiosity than they were prepared to accept.

The ideological category presents a dilemma of values when it involves explicit sexual behavior without clear criminality or intent to harm.

* A sex counselor expressed a philosophy that sexual inhibition was bad, and that post-Victorian prudery was our greatest social problem. His solution to the problem was to set up a laboratory of sex education at home. He invited his young son and daughter to watch him and his wife in various sexual activities, and then gave them permission to play with each other in the privacy of their own room. The man expressed pride that his family was so free of sexual hangups.

Idealization is institutionalized by radical groups such as the Rene Guyon Society. Based on the writings of Guyon (1933) and a grotesque distortion of the early work of Freud, the society claims that children need sex with compassionate adults to reduce violent antagonisms supposedly aroused by societal repression and guilt. Sexual repression is advanced as the cause of depression, suicide, delinquency, gang warfare, assault, and a host of other social problems. Under the slogan "Sex by year eight or else it's too late," the group advocates sexual rights for children, including abolition of laws restricting incest and

sexual abuse. The Rene Guyon Society claims a membership of "2000 parents and psychiatrists."*

PSYCHOTIC INTRUSION

In this situation, the adult has a psychotic level of confusion in reality testing and object choice, or personal sexual impulses may be projected to some kind of outside influence. The children become the object of a psychotic system. This is probably the least frequent of the several types of sexual contact; most people involved in sexual abuse are not psychotic.

RUSTIC ENVIRONMENT

The next level is one of the stereotypes that dominates popular concepts of incest. There is a prevailing folklore that isolated mountain settings promote incest and inbreeding. We suspect that rustic incest jokes supply a prejudicial scapegoat for urbanites not entirely immune from incestuous conflicts, and that regional variations in incest behavior are minor. Nevertheless, we do encounter an occasional migrant family that seems to accept as natural the practice of intrasibling and intergenerational incest. The helping professional faces a vexing problem in adapting that kind of value system into the dominant cultural mores and in deciding what level of active intervention is indicated.

TRUE ENDOGAMOUS INCEST

Endogamous (within marriage) incest develops as a surprisingly subtle distortion of normal family relationships. Although impulse control is diminished, the offenders are individuals who are not notably impulsive and who may appear quite well-adjusted and well-functioning within other areas of their lives. The breakdown occurs only when extraordinarily strong attractions develop as an outgrowth of role disturbances within the family, often limited to a specific point in time. The specific dynamics of endogamous incest are outlined clearly in the classic paper by Cormier (1962) and examined within a broader context in a review by Henderson (1972). Giaretto (1976a, 1976b) confirmed the pattern within a clinical sample of over 300 cases.

* The father is the key to the disturbed dynamics. The role distortion in the father involves a flight from stressful, disappointing adult realities into roles characteristic of a more exciting, more fulfilling period of his life. Some of the mechanisms are seen in the so-called male men-

*From a pamphlet addressed to California legislators published by the Rene Guyon Society, 324 So. First Street, Alhambro, CA 91802.

✓ opause, when a man may withdraw from his family and seek a re-endorsement of youth and masculine vitality via love affairs with younger women. A difference here is that the incestuous offender is more inhibited, more conventional, and more rigidly devoted to his role as a family man; he is determined to fulfill his sexual needs within his marriage. If his fantasies of fulfillment have not come true with his wife, he is increasingly frustrated and potentially angry. ✓

* The wife of the incestuous father is typically disenchanted with her husband and her marital role. She may be somewhat depressed by the loss of her youth and the weakening of her girlish attraction. She may be resentful of the adolescent attractiveness of her daughter, and may look for ways to demean her and to hold back her social development. The wife may turn outside the family for endorsement and diversion, absorbing herself in a job, church, or social commitments. For the first time in her married life, she is free; she can count on her daughter to take her place.

* The third corner of the incestuous triangle is, of course, the daughter. She radiates the fragile innocence of a child mixed with the vaguely destructive allure of the temptress. A girl needs support to keep up emotionally with her sudden rush to womanhood. Her most trusted allies in this process should be her mother and father. She looks to her mother as a model of feminine behavior and then tests the new model on her father. A father should be harmless to flirt with. He should be approving, admiring, and responsive to her growing sexual attraction, and he should provide a controlled, self-limited prototype of the sensual experiences she will develop with other men as an adult. Both father and mother should have a shared sense of the appropriateness of this prototype romance, and both should be comfortable in recognizing and defining the appropriate limits. Incestuous activity begins when the father needs to bend those limits and the mother chooses to ignore them.

* The man who bends the limits usually doesn't start out with the intention of seducing his daughter. By the time the relationship becomes sexualized, he relates to her more as if she were his wife: not the adult woman to whom he is married, but an imagined reincarnation of his bride-to-be. The daughter may have assumed many of the more ingratiating aspects of the wife's role: she greets him fondly after a miserable day at work, puts his food on the table, and entertains him at dinner. After she tucks the younger children into bed, she may pour him a drink and nestle beside him watching television.

Just as the man is flattered and stimulated by his daughter's attentions, the girl is at first gratified by his more open affection. Trusting acceptance and curiosity are role-appropriate for her as she waits for

her father to define the limits of this new game. If she tries to stop him, she is likely to find he is now deaf to her protests. A combination of parental possessiveness and sexual arousal have overpowered the protective role he would ordinarily offer.

* In the aftermath of the initial sexual experience, the father typically feels guilty and frightened. He will tend to scapegoat the girl for leading him on and will almost always coerce her into silence with the threat of disgrace and family disruption. In his desperation, he may also threaten violence. The early ventures into incest may not have been premeditated but, once established, there tends to be a compulsion for repetition. The child feels used and betrayed by her father, and feels she has no worth except as a sexual object. She is alternately courted and demeaned, loved for her attraction and then hated for her power, often labeled as bitch, slut, or whore. The second level of betrayal comes when the girl seeks escape. She may turn to her mother, only to be accused of lying or condemned for seducing the father. Even if the mother accepts the story, she may still fail to act. One daughter recalled the reaction: "They'll send your father to jail and we'll all end up on welfare. Is that what you want to do to us?"

* The third level of betrayal comes from the helping institutions. The girl is punished by the demand for explicit, incriminating testimony and by being regarded as depraved and ruined through her participation. The father may deny everything, forcing the girl into an adversary role. Not uncommonly, the family will coerce the girl to recant her testimony to avoid court intervention, exposure, and disgrace. Even in the event of prosecution, the father may be acquitted, while the girl is assigned to a foster home. In any event the family is broken; the girl feels isolated and morally condemned. In her own mind, she comes to feel guilty and responsible.

* A bizarre spinoff of the labeling process is the fascination the girl presents to others. She may be regarded by relatives as dangerously attractive. Publicly deflowered as she is, she is regarded as no longer deserving of respect or protection. We know of at least four cases where male relatives have attempted seduction after a girl has admitted incest with her father.

* Deprived of self-worth and self-esteem, forsaken by parents, betrayed by other adults, cursed with a destructive concept of their own sexuality, many of these girls spend their lives searching for a redeeming relationship, yet retreating from positions of trust or intimacy. They expect rejection, betrayal, and punishment.

* The father often tries to be superauthoritarian in one area: limiting his daughter's access to potential boyfriends and outside social contact. The atmosphere is counterproductive of genuine growth and ma-

turity for the girl. Sometimes the only escape is the transfer of the father's attention to a younger daughter. Several children may be involved serially, each one in turn ignoring the welfare of the younger sister.

MISOGYNISTIC INCEST

- In this variation of endogamous dynamics, fear and hatred of women are relatively predominant. (Romantic idealization, disenchantment, and anger toward the wife are typical also of the prior category.) The offender has a history of conflict with his own mother, and a tendency toward violence and punishment of women. Wife-beating, rape, and physical abuse of children may be seen. The daughter is seen as a possession, and possessing her sexually is an assertion of his invulnerability to the control of women as well as an act of punitive defiance toward his wife.

Men of this type may conceptualize women in elaborate extremes, sanctifying the purity of the virgin and condemning the seductions of the whore.

- * One man physically abused his daughter as an infant, then idealized and overprotected her until she was raped on the street at age eight. His rage and grief were compounded by his feeling, "They have taken my little virgin from me." He persuaded his wife that the girl should watch them make love to undo the violence of the rape. The wife was herself a victim of incest and family rejection, which seemed to paralyze any outreach for help. She waited for more evidence to confirm her valid suspicion that her husband had initiated the girl into an ongoing sexual relationship after the bedroom episode. After two years, and then only after the man punished his wife by openly demonstrating fellatio with his daughter on two occasions, was she able to call the police.

- * Just as abused children are at risk of becoming abusing parents, sexually abused girls are at risk of selecting an abusive partner and failing to protect their children from intrusion. The man described above was typically hyperaggressive, hard-driving, and coercive of females. He had experienced success as a military police officer until he was psychiatrically discharged after physically battering the infant daughter he later seduced.

IMPERIOUS INCEST

This category represents a fusion of elements from the ideological, rustic, and misogynistic categories. These men set themselves up as emperors in their household domain. They play out an incredible caricature of the male chauvinist role, requiring wife and daughters to perform acts of sexual fealty. One man, who initiated three daughters into his service, even constructed a throne for himself. The domestic

grandiosity seems to compensate for an otherwise mediocre achievement level; such men tend to be displaced from rustic backgrounds, with poor education and few job skills. They may be highly religious, expressing rigid, fundamentalist Christian doctrines and quoting Scriptures to justify their domestic role.

- * One such man entered into a sexual relationship with his nine-year-old daughter while functioning as a fundamentalist minister. The mother, an extremely passive woman who made no decisions for herself, refused to intervene, despite repeated entreaties from the girl and an older sister. The older sister finally sought help from a rape hotline 13 years later, when she discovered her own seven-year-old daughter and the sister's three-year-old had been molested by their grandfather. The woman blamed her father for her own promiscuity, the sister's willingness to be beaten by her husband, a brother's "schizophrenia" and another brother's homosexuality. A third brother, at 15, had tried to seduce the caller's seven-year-old daughter. "We're all screwed up," she said. After two generations of repeated sexual abuse and imperious domination, only one family member was able to seek outside help, and then only via an anonymous hotline. Hotline counseling enabled the caller to report the sexual abuse and to seek psychiatric evaluation for her daughter.

PEDOPHILIC INCEST

- Some people have an erotic fascination with children. Males especially have the proclivity to retreat from castration fears and discomfort with peer relationships in search of a sex object they consider more innocent and less threatening (Mohr, 1962). Some act on their fantasies and take the risk of seeking out children in public places. Others resist any action (and in fact may repress even the fantasies) until they are overwhelmed with the stimulus and availability of their own children. A pedophile approaching a small child rarely attempts coitus; body contact, fondling, and oral contacts are more typical. Gender roles are somewhat less binding; a man may be attracted to boys as well as girls, even if his adult object preference is consistently heterosexual.

One slightly redemptive feature for the child is the relative freedom from stigma and guilt. Mother, relatives, and society at large are quick to protect the very young child and to identify the pathology in the father. Unfortunately, the very young child is unlikely to share daddy's secret game with others, and so may remain isolated from potential help.

CHILD RAPE

- Most pedophiles are gentle creatures. They cherish tenderness and innocence, and will back off from fear and resistance in their intended partner. The child rapist, confusing masculinity with power, can feel

sexually adequate only by frightening and overpowering his victims. His need to punish, his attraction to violence, and his poor impulse control, all coupled with perverse guilt and fear of discovery, put the child in extreme physical danger. This sort of chronically antisocial, potentially violent man is often found as a surrogate father living with a woman who is passive and self-punishing. *

Recurring rapacious intrusions on children within a family are a function of the passive mother as well as the aggressive male. *

* One mother of a seven-year-old left the room for some incidental shopping while her live-in boyfriend was ordering the little girl to strip and mimic her mother's coital posture. The man raped the child on that occasion, and for the next year-and-a-half imposed physically traumatic vaginal, anal, and oral intercourse. The girl pleaded for rescue but could not gain her mother's sympathy or protection. Neighbors reported hearing screaming and seeing discarded bedsheets stained with blood and feces. Both of the mother's two subsequent partners also molested the girl until she began to run away from home at age 11.

This case was investigated and taken to court on three occasions. In the first two instances the child was returned to the mother by judges sympathetic to the mother's assurances that she was participating in psychotherapy and determined not to resume her penchant for drugs and coercive mates.

PERVERSE INCEST

- This last category is called "perverse" or "pornographic" in the absence of any better superlatives to describe kinky, unfettered lechery. These cases are more bizarre, more frankly erotic, more flagrantly manipulative and destructive than those in earlier categories. Many of them have a kind of self-conscious, sex-scene quality in which the individual seems to be trying to set up rituals to fulfill a variety of forbidden fantasies. Many of the people involved would qualify clinically as polymorphous perverse, without specificity or limit to their sexual needs. They are people who try to solve their conflicts through sexual activity, and their responsibility to their partner is of secondary importance to their own particular needs.
- This group is called pornographic because of an apparent need to go beyond limits of socially acceptable sexual practice to explore whatever is most forbidden, with incest representing the ultimate taboo. Furthermore, the participants may want to record their achievements and to see themselves putting the fantasies into action; diaries, secret confessions, and Polaroid photographs seem to heighten their excitement. We are not suggesting that outside pornography creates the

abuses, but rather that the abusers seem caught up in creating their own pornography. *

Previous categories involved predominately one-to-one relationships, however disturbed or transient they might be. Multiple partners are more the rule here. There is an emphasis on flamboyance, freedom, and ritual pleasure.

There is a distressing similarity here to the characteristics of the "ideological" category, outlined above. The crucial differences seem to lie in the motivations of the individuals and the capacity for restraint. Here, the activity with children is contrived to gratify perverse needs and the rationalization evolves as a denial of guilt. The child is exploited as an accessory of the adult; rather than preparing a child for eventual adult sexuality, the child is drafted and trained to enact lurid parodies of adult sexual function. The distinction depends on highly subjective and relative judgments. The following examples may help to illustrate the difference.

* A mother and father enlisted their children into shared sexual activity and then, having conditioned the children into orgiastic adventures, used them as bait to draw in neighborhood boys to provide the father with a continuing harem. Another case was uncovered when a vice officer and his son infiltrated a social group advertised in the underground press. Men brought their preadolescent sons to scheduled meetings, trading the boys among themselves for extended orgies.

A final case illustrates the restless progression of perversity characteristic of this group.

* A man enlisted his seven-year-old daughter as a sex partner. He soon introduced her into the ritual punishment and torture of her mother, including burning her face and genitals with a soldering iron. In time, he also involved the daughter's young playmate in a foursome. When the mother grew too guilty and depressed to participate, the father and the two 12-year-old girls drove the mother to another city and forced her to leap to her death from a bridge.

EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

The categories of the spectrum appear to document increasingly abusive parental intrusions on children. Defining such intrusions as abusive requires evidence that they bring harm to the child. In our experience, the harm observed from incestuous encounters correlates not so much with the forcefulness or the perversity of the encounter as with the climate of environmental response. A child trapped in an encounter with a cherished parent may suffer greater psychological dam-

age than another child rescued from an incestuous rape. Psychological harm seems to occur not so much in the sexual experience itself, nor even in the fact of exploitation by an adult.

* We believe harm results from the perception by the child that the sexuality is socially inappropriate and that the relationship is exploitative. This parallels the conclusion of Sloane and Karpinski (1942) that incest is least harmful psychologically for the younger child, with the risks increasing as the subject approaches adolescence. The various aspects of guilt and betrayal are potentiated both by increasing sophistication in the subject and by guilt and ambivalence perceived in the parents. If the active sexual agent (father) and especially the nonparticipating adult (mother) are comfortable with the incestuous relationship, harm to the child is decreased (Raphling et al., 1967). Some authors contend that incest within an endorsing family can be nontraumatic (Bender and Blau, 1937) or even beneficial (Rascovsky and Rascovsky, 1950) to the child's emotional growth. Such findings may seem at first paradoxical and outrageous, but if valid they reinforce the original premise that incest can be a natural phenomenon and that taboos and conflicts are socially imposed.

* We are convinced from clinical and consulting experience that incest can do substantial harm. Experience in Parents Anonymous underscores a striking prevalence of incestuous experiences in the childhoods of parents who now have problems with physical and emotional abuse of their children (Howard, 1976). During the course of psychiatric consultation to Cedar House, a model therapeutic shelter for physically abusing families in Long Beach, California, it emerged that some 90% of the mothers seeking help for child abuse had been sexually abused as children (Lowry, 1977). Several of the young children of these mothers revealed through therapeutic play that they were currently involved in sexual relationships with the man in the house or with adult neighbors or friends. Giarretto (1976a) cited studies correlating incest with later prostitution and drug dependency, as well as a syndrome of feminine sexual incapacity.

* There is a striking similarity in the reported reactions of incest participants: The children take over the responsibility and the blame from the initiating parent. The betrayal of parental responsibilities and the failure of responsible adults leads the child to feel he or she is fundamentally bad and unworthy of care or help. Sexuality, tainted with guilt and fear, becomes exaggerated as the only acknowledged aspect of attraction or power (Kaufman, et al. 1954). The child grows up expecting and deserving abuse, often searching endlessly and hopelessly for a redeeming experience with an older partner.

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It must be recognized that these implications of harm are retrospective; they are based on complaints of people already identified as being harmed. To measure more objectively the effects of incestuous experiences there must be prospective research, as well as a more energetic search for incest participants who give no evidence of harm. Until reliable data are established, the potential for enlightened, constructive intervention will remain impeded by uncertainty and interprofessional misunderstanding.

The ambiguity of the clinical literature leads to ambiguity of social response. Although all states now have child abuse laws requiring reporting of sexual abuse, a federally sponsored Child Abuse Intervention Prescriptive Package states that there is neither sufficient evidence of harm nor sufficient optimism for treatment to justify legal intervention in intrafamily sexual abuse (Schacter, 1976).

DISCUSSION

The spectrum of family sexuality presents a number of implications for intervention and management. The increasing sexual pathology within the spectrum is paralleled both by increasing character pathology and increasing social alienation. Parents in each successive category can be expected to be less amenable to conventional psychotherapy and more resistant to intervention. The endogamous incest family occupies the pivotal position in these considerations. Giarretto (1976a, 1976b) has demonstrated the value of a specialized multifocal outpatient program for such families.

The level of mysogynous incest goes beyond the endogamous population reported by Giarretto. Success in outpatient programs and prognosis for family reconstitution are jeopardized in the misogynistic group by the inherent character pathology and the poor basis for marital bonding. Yet one of our patients, described earlier in the misogynistic category, achieved substantial improvement after arrest and treatment within a hospital milieu for sexual offenders. He insists he could not have changed without incarceration and an imposed milieu.

There is less reason for optimism with the imperious father or the child rapist. The devotion of the imperious father to his family can provide some leverage, but only if the family can support the need for outside control. By definition, the child rapist is criminally sociopathic, with only shallow transient relationships. We know of no effective treatment models for such men.

The women who accept misogynistic, imperious, or rapacious partners deserve enlightened attention, not only for their own needs but

for the protection of the children in their care. It is our conviction that counseling or therapy alone does not meet the needs of such deprived, defensive individuals. We have seen striking growth in passively sex-abusing women within self-help experiences, coupled with firm limits and expectations from the justice system.

* In all the abusive categories, the children deserve the first consideration. Every effort must be made to avoid further scapegoating and condemnation of the victim. Crisis outreach and protection are ideal, but support and reassurance can be helpful at any stage.

Sexual abuse is the most concealed, most distressing, and most controversial form of child abuse. We believe it deserves the same quality of enlightenment and helping resources that have revolutionized the approach to the other forms of abuse.

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SEX BETWEEN SIBLINGS:

SEX PLAY, INCEST, AND AGGRESSION

DAVID FINKELHOR

SEXUAL relations between siblings have not been the subject of many studies. In fact, there have been more studies on the absence of sibling sex than on its presence. A few investigators have examined sibling incest experiences that were brought to the attention of courts or social agencies (Meiselman, 1978; Weinberg, 1955). Anthropologists have taken a cross-cultural look at sibling incest, or, more precisely, at its absence (Fox, 1962; Shepher, 1971b; Wolf, 1970). At least one survey has recorded the number of incest experiences in a cross section of Americans (Hunt, 1974).

* The most readily available reports on sibling sexual experiences come from the clinical literature. In many such cases, sibling incest appears to be the product of highly disorganized family environments (Weinberg, 1955). One study of jailed offenders even affirmed to some extent the once popular stereotype that brothers who commit incest have a tendency toward low intelligence (Gebhard et al., 1965). Obviously, however, such samples are extreme ones, and it is very hard to draw any generally applicable conclusions about sibling sexual experiences from them.

The most theoretically provocative studies of sibling sex come from anthropology. Recently several researchers have tried to revive an early anthropological theory of Westermarck which argued that there were barriers to sibling incest intrinsic to the family, a theory that some have characterized as, "Familiarity breeds contempt." These an-

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*thropologists have been able to demonstrate in at least two contexts that when children are socialized together as siblings (Wolf, 1966, 1970), and, at least in one case, when they engage in a great deal of childhood sex play together (Shepher, 1971a), it seems to inhibit sexual attraction between them as adults, even in the absence of taboos on such attraction.

Hunt (1974) conducted a sexual survey for *Playboy* magazine that investigated the incidence of sibling sexual experiences; the focus of the survey emerged primarily out of an interest in whether contemporary sexual permissiveness was leading to a breakdown of some of society's most fundamental taboos. He discovered a fair amount of sibling sexual contact (about 4 percent) in a national sample of 1800, as well as evidence that the incidence might be increasing.

However, he belittled his own findings, saying that the incestuous activity was "far less momentous than [it] seems at first glance . . . A third of the males and nearly half the females had their incestuous experiences before age 12. . . . It is reasonable to assume that most of this experience consisted of childish sex play." *

Unfortunately, none of these studies has taken a truly descriptive approach to sibling sexual experiences. Their samples have been too specialized or their focus of interest too narrow. They have accepted without hesitation some conventional assumptions and images of sibling sex.

The research presented in this chapter is part of a study that tries to present a more detailed description and inventory of sibling sexual experiences than have previously been available. The preliminary presentation will focus primarily on two conventional assumptions that are called into question by this study.

One assumption is that sibling sexual activity is almost entirely the province of young children. Shepher (1971a) finds that sex play is rampant among his kibbutz children but totally absent among pre-adolescents and adolescents. Hunt seconds this assumption both in the way he interprets his own data and in his reference to "sex play." The second assumption comprises the strong belief that this sex play is clearly distinguishable from something else called *sibling incest*, that is much rarer and more serious. The common view is that "sex play" is mostly between peers and benign, and serves important socialization functions.

The findings of the current study urge caution on all these points. Sexual experiences among siblings are more varied, less categorizable, and less stereotyped than these assumptions would lead one to believe.

In keeping with our caution concerning some of these conventional

assumptions, we have chosen to avoid the use of the term *incest* whenever possible, and to rely simply on the expression *sibling sexual experiences*, which we feel implies fewer judgments about the activity.

THE SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a survey of 796 college undergraduates who were questioned about their childhood sexual experiences (a more detailed description of the study and its data analysis procedures is available in Finkelhor, 1979). The survey was conducted at six New England colleges and universities in the fall and winter of 1977-1978. The schools were selected for their diversity and included an elite Ivy League college, three large state universities and two nonresidential community colleges.

Questionnaires to be filled out during class time were distributed to entire classes of students. The classes themselves were ones where the subject matter or the personal interest of the instructor could enhance the motivation of the students to participate and answer truthfully. As a result, the courses represented were primarily social science and human sexuality courses. The participation rate was quite high, over 90 percent.

The questionnaire approached the matter of sibling sex indirectly. It asked the respondents many questions about family background, family dynamics, family attitudes toward sex, and sources of sex information. Then two detailed sections of the questionnaire asked for information about childhood sexual experiences with any other children (including siblings), and any lifetime sexual experiences with family members. Only 10 percent of the respondents chose to skip these last two sections.

No claims can be made that this sample is representative of any larger population. However, it is neither a clinical nor a self-selected sample, an advantage over samples in many other studies of incest. It is quite diverse in its social class and ethnic makeup, although somewhat more middle-class than the New England population as a whole. It has a particularly large group of students (61 percent) who grew up in nonmetropolitan areas. There are also very few blacks (under 1 percent) in the sample. But, unlike many college student populations, there is also a sizable subgroup of people (17 percent) over the age of 24.

Sexual experiences were defined by a list of activities provided to the respondent. This list included (1) an invitation to do something sexual, (2) showing sex organs, (3) fondling in a sexual way, (4) touching sex organs, (5) attempted or simulated intercourse, and (6) intercourse. Re-

TABLE 11-1. Confidence Intervals for Percentages Cited in Text*

Percentage Range	Confidence Interval (%)
5	± 4
6 to 10	± 5
11 to 15	± 6
16 to 21	± 7
22 to 32	± 8
33 to 67	± 9
68 to 78	± 8
79 to 84	± 7
85 to 89	± 6
90 to 94	± 5
95	± 4

* Figures are based on an N of 114 and give a range within which true figure should fall in 95 out of 100 cases.

spondents were encouraged, however, to write in any other kind of experience they considered sexual besides the choices available. For the purposes of the analysis presented in this paper, sibling sexual experiences were considered to be any such experiences that occurred between any kinds of siblings; stepsiblings and halfsiblings were not distinguished from natural siblings.

THE VARIETIES OF SIBLING SEX

Thirteen percent of the sample (± 2 percent)* reported a sibling sexual experience. Reports were more numerous for girls than for boys, 15 percent (± 3 percent) of the girls mentioning such an experience, but only 10 percent (± 3 percent) of the boys. These percentages are quite a bit higher than Hunt's (1974) figures but are still almost certainly underestimates. Not only is some concealment assumed, but also the

*None of the figures quoted in this chapter should be taken as anything but an approximation, keeping in mind the idea of a confidence interval. A confidence interval, for the purposes of this chapter, is a range within which there is a 95 percent probability that the correct figure falls. Confidence intervals only have true meaning when they apply to a random sample from a defined population, which this survey is not. However, we have chosen to include information herein for establishing confidence intervals as a cautionary measure. Since the number of sibling sexual experiences is not large, the percentages they yield in various tabulations might be wide of the mark even if we had a random sample. The confidence interval indicates how large a range the reader should allow for the figure, had this been a random sample. Some of these intervals are as large as ± 9 percent and should give the reader a sobering view of how imprecise the figures are.

For each of the percentages in the text, the reader can consult Table 11-1 to estimate confidence intervals.

nature of our college student population underrepresents the strata of the population that tend to have the highest rates of incest (Finkelhor, 1979).

The sibling sexual experiences were not at all confined to young children. Seventy-three percent of them occurred when one of the partners was older than eight, and 35 percent occurred when one was older than 12.* One of the experiences involved partners who were both in their late twenties.

Heterosexual experiences predominated (74 percent), but a fair number of homosexual sibling contacts were reported. Sixteen percent of the experiences were homosexual ones between brothers and another 10 percent between sisters. The homosexual experiences were more likely to occur during preadolescence from age 9 to about 12.†

The heterosexual relationships conformed to the pattern of sexual relationships in the culture as a whole, insofar as the brothers were more often the older partners and the initiators than were the sisters. In 67 percent of the brother-sister experiences, the brother was the older partner. On the average, these sisters were about 3.6 years younger than their partners. The average age difference for all the relationships in the sibling sexual experience sample was 2.9 years.

* The main sexual activity that siblings engaged in was some kind of genital touching. Over half the experiences were in this category, which includes things that are often called *heavy petting* and *mutual masturbation* (see table 11-2). Only 4 percent involved actual intercourse, although another 7 percent reported a copulatory activity that was similar to intercourse but did not involve penetration, either because it was physiologically difficult or because the partners wanted to avoid its stigma or its risks.

The sexual activity in another 30 percent of the experiences consisted primarily of siblings exhibiting their genitals to one another. As might be expected, the exhibitionism was more common among the younger children and the intercourse more common among the older children and adolescents.

Some of the experiences were fleeting and some went on for an extended period throughout childhood. Almost exactly a third of them happened once and never recurred. On the other hand, 27 percent continued with varying frequency for over a year. Two respondents told about experiences that continued for as long as 10 years.

*There were twice as many females in the sample as males. Any statistic in this chapter not reported separately for males and females has been weighted to portray what the finding would have been in a sample with an equal number of males and females.

†All comparisons cited in this chapter have been subjected to a chi-square test and are significant at better than the .05 level unless otherwise indicated.

TABLE 11-2. Type of Sibling Sexual Activity by Age of Respondent

Type of Activity	Age Range (Yr)		
	0-8 (N=45)	9-12 (N=50)	13+ (N=17)
Exhibiting genitals	40	24	5
Fondling and touching genitals	53	60	64
Intercourse and attempted intercourse	5	15	18
Other	—	2	13

The personal reactions to these sibling experiences were about as perfectly divided as they could be. Thirty percent of the respondents said theirs had been positive experiences, 30 percent said theirs had been negative, and the remainder refused to categorize theirs as either positive or negative. The preadolescents reported, on the whole, the most negative experiences.

Respondents were asked to choose among some words to describe their reactions: *fear*, *shock*, *surprise*, *interest*, and *pleasure*. The largest number (55 percent) picked *interest*, indicating that, for many, the experience had an educative, exploratory quality that may have been motivated by curiosity.

COERCIVE EXPERIENCES

Many people are prepared to view sibling sexuality as fairly benign. This is particularly true since it is generally stereotyped as occurring among young children of roughly equal age. A significant proportion of the experiences reported in our sample were less than benign, however. They were sometimes characterized by force and coercion and sometimes by large age differences between the siblings.

Some kind of force was reported in 25 percent of the experiences. Force could include physical force or threats of force or both (the questionnaire did not distinguish between these aspects of force), but the indication of force or threat of force was clearly in the respondent's, not the investigator's, judgment. One man we interviewed reported, for example, that at age four his brother and some friends held him down and performed anal intercourse on him. A woman reported she awoke one night to find her brother at her bed, holding her down while he ran his hands all over her body and her genitals.

This kind of coercion occurs more often than people expect. We are

accustomed to the fact that a great deal of aggression goes on among siblings, and sometimes cruelty of a sort that one rarely encounters among adults (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980). Apparently sibling aggression can take sexual forms and result in a kind of attack that would be considered rape or sexual assault if it occurred outside the family. Not surprisingly, because they were in general younger, weaker, and less coached in physical aggression, girls were the victims of force in 82 percent of the coercive experiences, while boys were victims in 18 percent.

Whether or not they involve force, many sibling sexual experiences can have a coercive character because of a large age disparity between the partners. Twenty-three percent of the respondents' experiences occurred between siblings who were five or more years apart in age. The likelihood that force will be used does seem to increase when the age disparity increases, but we would describe many of these sibling experiences as coercive even though no force was involved. Much older siblings can use their authority, as well as misrepresent moral standards, to gain the participation of younger siblings. They are more experienced and can manipulate incentives for the younger child. Our judgment that such experiences are coercive is based in part on a value position and in part on interviews with participants.

Thus, not all sibling sex is among peers; some has the same exploitive character associated with instances of father-daughter incest. For example, one woman in the sample told how, when she was eight, her 13-year-old brother bribed her to have sex with himself and a friend. The brother was much older, highly respected by his sister, and he offered her a quarter, which in those depression times seemed like a fortune. The sister had only a vague idea of what it was they were doing. Even though she had complied with him, she felt she had been exploited. This kind of experience is typical of ones where coercion takes the form not of physical force but of the authority of one sibling pitted against the naiveté of another.

A TYPOLOGY OF EXPERIENCES

As indicated earlier, much of the literature would lead one to the belief that it is a fairly easy matter to distinguish between childhood sex play among siblings and something that could be considered "real" sibling incest. However, in this sample, it was not easy to do this. Sibling sex experiences appeared to be scattered anywhere from age 4 on through age 16 with no noticeable lines of demarcation (see Table 11-3). There was absolutely no evidence for a "latency period" during which sexual activity abated and which would suggest an age span during which sex play would

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TABLE 11-3. Age at Time of Sibling Sexual Experience

Age	No. of Persons*
3	1
4	5
5	17
6	17
7	23
8	25
9	18
10	23
11	22
12	22
13	11
14	10
15	8
16	10
17	6
18	2
19	6
Total	221
Median age	10.2

* The age for each respondent and his/her partner was taken from each questionnaire.

not constitute "real" incest. In fact, more experiences were reported as occurring between ages 8 and 11, the middle of the so-called latency period, than in any other period.

The picture is further complicated because, as stated earlier, quite a few experiences occurred between siblings of substantially different ages. When a 15-year-old sexually mature teenager is sexually involved with his eight-year-old sister, is it sex play, is it incest, or is it something else? Such combinations also defy the conventional distinctions.

The attempt to perpetuate a simple distinction between sex play and incest should be abandoned. Much additional serious research is needed to examine the varieties of sibling sex experiences before such a clear typology can be asserted. In an attempt to begin this effort, in this study sibling sex experiences have been provisionally analyzed along two dimensions. Based on the assumption that the age of the children involved made some difference, and also that the age difference between the partners made some difference, we proposed a six-fold classification of relationships (see Table 11-4).

This classification distinguishes among three groups, children, pre-

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TABLE 11-4. Age Criteria for Defining Types of Sibling Sex Experiences

	Child (0-8 yr)	Preadolescent (9-12 yr)	Adolescent-Adult (13+ yr)
Peer	2 yr or less	3 yr or less	5 yr or less
Nonpeer	3 yr or more	4 yr or more	6 yr or more

adolescents, and adolescents and divides each group in two on the basis of whether the experiences were with peers or with substantially older partners. It appeared that the best indicators of substantial age disparity should be different for each age group; this corresponded to an a priori judgment that among young children a year's age difference implied a larger disparity in sophistication and authority than it would among older children. The age disparities used were (1) more than two years for the child group, (2) more than three years for the preadolescent group, and (3) more than five years for the adolescent group.

However, we modified the typology in two ways. (1) There were no adolescents who had experiences with substantially older siblings, under our criteria, so we dropped this category from our analysis. (2) We made a separate category for respondents who said that *they* were the substantially older partners. We expected that as the "aggressors" in what were situations of substantial inequality, such respondents would have a unique perspective on their experiences. They were a group that seemed to be taking greater risk than others in reporting their experiences, and it seemed likely that they would see things differently from those who were the "victims" in these kinds of experiences. The percentages of the sibling sex experiences that fell into each of the six categories is indicated in Table 11-5.

Notice that about one-third of the experiences were peer experiences among children, the classic so-called sex play group. Another third were peer experiences among preadolescents and adolescents, while the final third were situations of substantial age difference. These groupings turned out to be useful in distinguishing among the experiences.

Some of the most obvious differences were between those experiences where the partners were the same age and those where there was a substantial age difference. (For the following comparisons, the group in which the respondent was the older "aggressor" has been excluded.) For example, force was much more common in the unequal situations than in the peer situations. Fifty percent of the unequal relationships involved force, but only 18 percent of the peer ones. This

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TABLE 11-5. Incidence of Sibling Sex Experiences

Type of Experience	Percent of Experiences ^a (N = 114)
Peer experiences ^b	
Child (0-8 yr)	33
Preadolescent (9-12 yr)	22
Adolescent (13+ yr)	11
Nonpeer experiences	
Child (0-8 yr)	11
Preadolescent (9-12 yr)	12
Respondent older than partner	11

^aSome persons had two or more experiences.

^bNo distinction is made in peer experiences between cases where partner or respondent is older.

is a good indication that there was much less mutuality in the unequal group.

The most coercive relationships within this unequal-age group were the ones in which preadolescents were the younger "victims." It is possible that because they were bigger and less gullible than their younger equivalents, the preadolescents put up more resistance, and the older partners had to utilize more force to gain their participation.

Similarly, respondents from the unequal-age group reported a larger number of negative reactions to the experiences. Fifty-four percent evaluated them negatively when their sibling had been much older; only 20 percent did so when the sibling was a peer. This also confirms our impression that these experiences with older siblings were more disturbing and exploitive.

So the unequal experiences were reported to be more unpleasant, and they also involved more force. Was it the force that caused the negative reaction to these experiences, rather than the age difference? To untangle the effects, we did a regression analysis to see how all aspects of the experiences contributed to the respondents' reactions. Results are shown in Table 11-6.

The beta weights show the relative contributions of various factors. Age difference appears to be over twice as important as force, although both make significant contributions to a negative reaction to the experience.

The third important contributor to the regression analysis is a variable that represents the kind of sex act taking place between the siblings. Extracted from a factor analysis of the ten sexual activities listed in the questionnaire, it shows that experiences where the partners only

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TABLE 11-6. Relationship of Reactions to Features of Sibling Sex Experience

Feature of the Experience	Relative Contribution to Negative Reaction (Beta)
Force or threat of force	.176 (p < .05)
Age difference (yr)	.361 (p < .01)
Sexual acts factor (exhibition only)	-.277 (p < .01)
Amount of total variation in negative reaction explained by above features (R ² × 100)	32%

exhibited their genitals to one another without any touching or attempted intercourse tended to be less negative, all other things being equal.

This regression analysis, however, is more interesting for the factors it excludes than for those it includes. Several characteristics of sibling sex that one might think would be important appear to have had little effect at all on how it was appraised in our study.

Age of experience (but not age difference), for example, made no difference. Many theorists have argued that older siblings who engage in sex are more at risk than younger ones, but apparently this is not the case. The survey showed that experiences at older ages were just as likely to be good as ones at younger ages.

Homosexuality, also, made no difference. It would be plausible to think that the greater stigma of homosexuality would make homosexual sibling sex more problematical. But this was not the case.

Engaging in sexual intercourse did not increase the negative or positive outcome. One would think that sexual intercourse between siblings would be most fraught with perils. This logic was not supported. A similar finding holds for the duration of the experience.

Finally, even a factor mentioned previously as having some importance, the sex of the respondent, turned out ultimately to be of negligible causal significance. If girls' experiences were more negative, apparently it was not because they were girls, but because they encountered more coercion and more experiences with much older partners.

In sibling sexual experiences, as with many other experiences in our society, women tend to be disadvantaged. In this study overall, more girls reported sibling sex as unpleasant than did the boys (35 percent compared with 22 percent). Another indication of this reaction may be the fact that the girls tended not to repeat the activities as often.

When the experiences were not mutual, the girls most often tended to be the "victims" and the boys the "aggressors." As mentioned earlier, girls were the victims in 82 percent of the coercive experiences and boys in only 18 percent. Among the unequal age partners, 70 percent of the time it was the girl who was the junior partner, compared to only 30 percent of the time for the boys. In heterosexual experiences, even when the girl was the older partner, in a majority of cases it was the boy who initiated the activity.

As stated earlier, girls tended to be younger than their partners, which helps account for their role as victims. The average age for girls was 9.0 and for the boys 10.0. In spite of only a year's difference in average age, when an older brother and a younger sister had a sexual experience together, he was, on the average, 3.6 years older than she. Girls were also much more likely to have experiences at really early ages than boys, for better or for worse. Twenty-six percent of the girls had their experiences under age six, compared to only 10 percent of the boys.

Thus, although the sibling sexual experiences of our respondents were experienced as ranging from positive to negative in a wide spectrum, girls are clearly more vulnerable. This conclusion coincides with other data that show that the family is a more sexually dangerous place for a girl.

EFFECTS ON ADULT SEXUALITY

One of the least well understood questions in child development is how family and childhood experiences contribute to later sexual behavior. How might sibling sexual experiences be expected to affect development? In general, childhood sexual experiences, and other kinds of childhood sexual learning, have not proved to be influential in explaining levels of sexual activity (Spanier, 1973) or sexual self-esteem (Estep, et al., 1977), nor has childhood sexual trauma been shown to have much effect on marital satisfaction or orgasmic capability (Terman, 1938). There is little reason to think sibling sexual experiences should be any more influential.

This study is not well equipped to grapple with the question of outcome. The questionnaire explored the nature of sexual experiences in childhood in depth, but, because of its length, could only touch on adult behavior. We have only three limited indicators of adult behavior: (1) the frequency of current heterosexual activity, (2) the frequency of current homosexual activity, and (3) a scale designed to evaluate the level of respondents' sexual self-esteem. For purposes of analysis, sibling sexual experiences were distinguished as (1) positive versus neg-

TABLE 11-7. Incidence of Current Regular Intercourse Among Women With and Without Sibling Sexual Experiences

Type of Experience	Regular Intercourse	
	Percent	(N)
No sibling sexual experiences		
A. No prepubertal sexual experiences	49	(160)
B. Some prepubertal sexual experiences	53	(244)
Sibling sexual experiences*		
With peer partner	73	(43)
With nonpeer partner	69	(29)
Positive experience	71	(33)
Negative experience	72	(40)

* All significantly different at .05 level from group A and from group B (t-test).

ative experiences, (2) peer versus nonpeer experiences, and (3) childhood versus preadolescent and adolescent experiences.* Because of the more limited number of male respondents, most of the analysis has been limited to females.

Table 11-7 shows the percentage of women in the survey who were engaged in regular sexual intercourse, defined as at least once in the last month, or more often. Those who had had sibling sexual experiences were more likely to be sexually active than those who had not had such an experience. These findings held only for women. Interestingly, both those with positive and with negative, with peer and with nonpeer experiences all had higher incidences of adult sexual activity. The exact nature of a woman's sibling experience did not appear to make a difference. Those with sibling sex histories also were currently more active than those who had some other kind of childhood sexual experience, suggesting that something specific to the sibling relationship had made a difference.

How does age at the time of experience affect this relationship? In Table 11-8 we see that the overall effect of early experiences was not

*Positive and negative experiences were classified by a combination of the respondents' and the investigator's criteria. Negative experiences were those that were rated by the respondent as such or that, if neutrally rated, involved force or a large age difference. Positive experiences were the remainder.

Peer experiences were defined by a sliding scale of age differences. For children eight and under, peers were partners not more than two years older. For children nine through 12, they were partners not more than three years older. For those above 12, they were partners not more than five years older. Nonpeers were partners outside this range. Determination was made from the vantage point of the younger child in the relationship. Finally, childhood experiences were ones that occurred at age eight or before.

TABLE 11-8. Regular Current Intercourse Among Women With and Without Sibling Sexual Experiences, by Age of Women at Time of Experience

Type of Experience	Experience Before Age 9 % (N)	Experience at Age 9 and After % (N)
No sibling sexual experiences	50 (402)	
Sibling sexual experiences		
With peer partner	77*(26)	74*(27)
With nonpeer partner	58 (12)	78*(19)
Positive experience	77*(22)	74*(19)
Negative experience	62 (16)	79*(29)

* Significantly different from "no sibling sexual experiences" group at .05 level (t-test).

so great as that of later ones. Later experiences, both peer and non-peer, positive as well as negative, were associated with increased current incidence of intercourse. Negative experiences at an early age had no such effect. The impact of early negative experience washes out, perhaps because the experiences were forgotten, repressed, or superseded by other experiences.

Table 11-9 divides the women into two groups: a typical college-age group (18 to 23) and older women in the group 24 and over. From the table we can see that it was not the older women whose adult sexual activity had been affected by the sibling sex, but the younger women who had a dramatically higher rate of current sexual activity. Apparently, as adulthood continues, others without sibling sex experiences catch up in terms of sexual activity; and the age difference disappears.

Does sibling sex affect the incidence of homosexual activity, too? Only 8 percent of respondents had had any homosexual contacts during the previous year. In general, having had sibling sex was not associated with any significantly greater amount of adult homosexual activity. However, respondents who had had *homosexual* sibling experiences do seem to have a higher rate of adult homosexual activity, suggesting some connection between childhood homosexual sibling sex and adulthood homosexuality.

The Sexual Self-Esteem Index in our questionnaire tries to capture

TABLE 11-9. Incidence of Regular Intercourse Among Younger and Older Women, With and Without Sibling Sexual Experiences

Experience	Age 18-23 % (N)	Age 24+ % (N)
No sibling sex	44 (330)	77 (65)
Sibling sex	72* (58)	77 (17)

*t = test: p < .001.

some of the dimensions of a healthy adult sexual orientation: comfort in thinking about sex, satisfaction with one's sexual experiences, and level of sexual activity. The scale was normalized such that the mean for both men and women was 50, and the standard deviation for each was 20. The scale reliability was not high (around 0.5), but was high enough for use in an exploratory study (Nunnally, 1967).

The effects of sibling sexual experiences on the sexual self-esteem of women are shown in Table 11-10. Positive and peer sibling sexual experiences are associated with a significantly higher level of sexual self-esteem than was found in women in other categories of experience. In particular, such women are more apt to like their bodies and to be comfortable about how much they think about sex and how much they do it.

It would appear, then, that in some way, positive and/or peer-oriented sibling sexual experiences had lasting, apparently healthy effects on some of the women's sexual outlook. For those who had negative and nonpeer sibling experiences, sexual self-esteem was either at the same level or below those without any sibling experiences. The specifically nonpeer group, in fact, was significantly lower in sexual self-esteem than those who had had no child sex experience at all, indicating a possible impairment of self-esteem.

Why would a positive sibling sexual experience be associated with a more long-term and more positive effect than other childhood sexual experiences? One of the crucial developmental tasks in adolescence and early childhood is learning to combine intimacy and friendship with sex. Girls who have had positive sexual relationships with siblings may have a head start in this process, in that they have had an

TABLE 11-10. Sexual Self-Esteem Scores of Women With and Without Sibling Sexual Experiences

Type of Experience	Sexual Self-Esteem Score	N
No sibling sexual experience		
A. No prepubertal sexual experiences	54	(170)
B. Some prepubertal sexual experiences	46	(248)
Sibling sexual experiences		
With peer partner	59 ^{a, b}	(44)
With nonpeer partner	46 ^a	(29)
Positive experience	57 ^{a, b}	(34)
Negative experience	52	(40)

^aSignificantly different from groups A and B combined at .05 level (t-test).

^bSignificantly different from group B at .05 level (t-test).

- * experience of intergrating sex into an ongoing relationship of some emotional significance.
- * Positive peer experiences also had more of an impact on self-esteem if they occurred later in childhood. Exploitive (negative-outcome) experiences had more of an impact if they occurred earlier. Those women who had had peer sibling sexual experiences that occurred early in childhood had very low self-esteem scores; similar nonpeer experiences that occurred at later ages did not have this effect.
- * The implication here is vitally important: young children (or at least females) are at greater risk of trauma from sibling sex experiences. Among older children, the negative and exploitive experiences seem to be better handled, and the negative impact on these children is minimal. If, for young children, exploitive experiences with older siblings are likely to have a negative lasting effect, then the risks clearly can outweigh any possible benefits.
- * Almost any kind of sibling sex, at any age, seemed to project to increased intercourse activity among young women. However, the effect of sibling sex on self-esteem seemed to depend much more on what happened and when. Some people fear that an experience such as sibling sex can lead to promiscuity: a fruitless and neurotic search for repeated sexual experiences. However, in such a case, we would expect a high level of sexual activity to be coupled with low level of self-esteem, a combination that does not occur in our study.

The analysis of men's experiences produced very few statistically significant relationships, attributable in part to the smaller number of men in the sample and to the smaller number of sibling sex experiences they reported. There was no evidence that sibling sexual experiences for men were associated with higher frequencies of adult intercourse. However, it does appear that, for men, all varieties of sibling sexual experiences may be associated with lowered adult self-esteem.

The crucial difference may lie in the fact that men were more often the initiators in the sibling sexual involvement they reported. Thus, in those cases where sibling sex was an outgrowth of sexual maladjustment and conflict, this pathology was more likely to reside in the male than the female partner. The boys' lower self-esteem as adults might not reflect an impact that the sibling sex had on them so much as the fact that they were more conflicted to start with. However, this conclusion is highly speculative and based on weak statistical evidence.

REVELATION OF THE EXPERIENCES

One of the most interesting of our findings about siblings who have sex together concerned their reluctance at the time the experiences occurred, to discuss them with anyone. Only 12 percent of our respond-

- ents told someone about their sibling sexual experiences. That in itself is significant, but, curiously, the reluctance was even greater among those who had experiences with much older siblings. Not a single child who had been involved in sex with a much older sibling confided it to anyone—not to a parent, another sibling, or a friend. This seems paradoxical because, of all the children involved in sibling sex, these were the children with the least reason to feel guilty. Since the activity had been with a much older sibling, the younger ones were most objectively "victimized" and therefore least likely to appear blameworthy in the eyes of others. Yet they were the most reluctant to tell.
- * One obvious explanation may be fear. If their older siblings had used force to have sex with them, as many had, it was likely that they would use force again, this time in retaliation for telling. So, out of fear, the younger siblings may have stayed quiet.
- * Another reason they may not have talked about their experiences was because they doubted their own credibility. What if they told and their older siblings denied it? Who would the parents or others be most likely to believe? Probably they would believe the older sibling, and that would just have made the situation worse.

Here is an example of such a situation, told, curiously, from the point of view of the older sibling. It is not necessarily typical, but it serves to illustrate the credibility problems of younger siblings. When this respondent was 12 she had a sexual experience with her younger sister, who was only five.

- * R: I remember I said, "If you tell, I'll kill you." Of course, she told . . . at the dinner table, the next night. I was there, my grandmother was there, my mother was there, my brothers and sisters.
- I: What did she say?
- R: She said, "The night before Penny let me touch her in places." I gave her an evil eye, I'm sure, and said, "You're lying." Nothing else was said about it, then, although my grandmother said something else later. She said she knew that little girls have wild imaginations and that was all that was ever said.

- * Finally, victims of aggression have a tendency to blame themselves for what happened, no matter who was to blame objectively. This has been noticed among rape victims, battered women, and others. It may be the result of cultural stereotypes that make victims feel responsible, but it may also be a natural aspect of the coping process by which victims try to retain their sense of mastery over fate by taking responsibility for it (Bulman and Wortman, 1977). Because they blame themselves, such victims may be less likely to reveal their experiences.

Whatever the cause, this finding that there is a very strong tendency in sibling sex—and in exploitive kinds of sibling sex in particular—for

no one to be told is disturbing in its implications. It suggests that when an older sibling is sexually exploiting a younger sibling, it is very unlikely that the parents or anyone else will hear about it.

This in turn casts some new light on a fact reported by clinical studies of incest: very few cases of sibling incest are reported to agencies. * Most researchers have explained this fact by saying that sibling incest is likely to be benign or handled within the family and therefore is not reported as often as other types of incest are (Masters, 1963). Our study suggests another explanation: sibling victimization may be among the kinds of experiences that are the most difficult to reveal.

In addition, there is an important difference between incest with a parent and incest with a sibling that may make the sibling incest less liable to detection. In parent-child incest, there is usually another parent who has a large personal stake in knowing what is going on. It is true that, in many instances, mothers appear to consciously or unconsciously avoid clues that father-daughter incest is taking place (Meiselman, 1978), but nonetheless one of the most common ways for father-daughter incest to come to light is a result of intervention on the part of the mother.

Although parents have a general interest in supervising their children to make sure they are not exploited, sibling incest does not pose as direct a conflict for parents as father-daughter incest, which is a triangular conflict situation that intimately involves the mother. Thus, parents may be less vigilant about sibling sex, and less likely to suspect it. In any case, our findings indicate that a large number of exploitive sibling sexual experiences are going undetected and unreported. *

AGGRESSION AMONG SIBLINGS

Researchers are as guilty as parents of ignorance of some of these seamier sides of relationships among siblings. In a computer search of over 8000 citations in *Psychological Abstracts* between the years 1967 and 1976, Steinmetz (1977) could find only a couple of articles on the subject of aggression among children in families. This finding is particularly remarkable in view of the fact that almost everybody experiences sibling violence at one time or another. A later study (Straus et al., 1980) indicates that it is the number one source of violence in American families. Eighty-two percent of parents in this national sample witnessed or knew of acts of violence among their children in a typical year. In 53 percent of the occurrences, the attack had been a severe one involving kicking, punching, beating up, throwing something at, or using a knife or gun on another sibling. Such violence is largely unobserved, ignored, or discounted by adults.

Seen in this context, the conclusion that sex among siblings can sometimes express hostile motives is very plausible.

BROTHER-SISTER AND OTHER FORMS OF INCEST

Many authors have speculated on the relative incidence of incest in studies both cross-cultural and within our own society. While it has generally been assumed that mother-son incest was very uncommon, there has been more controversy about the relative incidence of father-daughter and brother-sister experiences. Most authors have assumed a priori that brother-sister incest was the most common, based on the belief, at least in our society, that the taboo against such incest is the weakest and therefore its incidence should be the highest. However, much more father-daughter than brother-sister incest comes to light in clinic and court-related populations (Meiselman, 1978; Weinberg, 1955; Maisch, 1972); this and other theoretical considerations (see Meiselman, 1978, and Fox, 1962) have led some to argue that father-daughter incest is more common than its brother-sister counterpart. *

Our data, however, support the conventional assumptions. Within our survey, only one respondent (.1 percent of the sample) reported a sexual experiences with a mother, only 1 percent reported an experience with a father, and 13 percent reported an experience with a sibling.* Even if we speak only of brother-sister experiences that occurred when both partners were older than 12, the woman alone reported more brother-sister than father-daughter experiences.

The preponderance of brother-sister incest is accentuated if we consider two factors that skew any comparison in favor of father-daughter experiences. Simply put, more women lack a brother than lack a father. (This argument is being made, for the sake of simplicity, from a girl's point of view, but it could be generalized to include boys and the possibility of father-son incest.) Within our sample, for example, 21 percent of the women came from families without brothers, while all the women had fathers. Some of the women (16 percent), of course, lived without their fathers for various periods of time, but unless he was dead or completely out of the picture from the age of three onward, most of these women had some exposure to their fathers that could potentially have led to incest. To this finding must be added the fact that about a third of those without fathers at some time acquired stepfathers, to whom they were even more vulnerable. Yet, more *

*It would have been interesting in much of the foregoing analysis to have compared sibling sexual experiences to those between other nuclear family members. But, as can be seen, the number of father-child and mother-child experiences reported was too small to allow a meaningful statistical comparison.

women reported incest with brothers, even though exposure to brothers was less universal than exposure to fathers.

A second, less important, consideration accentuates the preponderance of sibling incest. Since most of the respondents in our survey are young adults, there is still much opportunity left for them to have incest experiences in the future. Assuming that brothers will outlive fathers, there will be more subsequent incest with brothers than with fathers. However, the present study is poorly designed to make inferences about incest among adults. Moreover, this consideration is relatively insignificant, since most cases of both father-daughter and brother-sister incest appear to occur while girls are still children.

SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION

The reported findings about sibling sexual relations reinforce previous research done with this particular sample on the subject of sexual victimization not limited to incest experiences (Finkelhor, 1979). In that work, sexual victimization was defined as a sexual experience between a child and any person at least five years older. Nineteen percent of the women and nine percent of the men reported having had some such childhood sex experience.

A large number of these victimization experiences were with family members, almost half in the case of girls. For both boys and girls, the partners were predominantly people they knew. The conclusion drawn was that the family was an arena of fairly high sexual vulnerability for a child.

Some of the other findings of that study may interest present readers.

1. The older partners reported by the children were almost all male.
2. The most vulnerable children were ones who grew up in lower-income families and on farms. Among girls, a particularly vulnerable group were ones who had lived for any length of time without their mothers, or who had had stepfathers.
3. Most children, as in this study, had their experiences in late preadolescence, and very few told anyone about them.
4. Finally, the two things that most consistently predicted how negatively the children felt about the experience were whether there was force involved and how much older than themselves their partners had been.

CONCLUSION

This chapter started out by criticizing some assumptions often made about sibling sexual experiences: (1) that there is a natural and self-evident distinction between sibling sex play and sibling incest,

and (2) that most childhood sibling activity is benign and peer-oriented. In contrast to these assumptions, we have presented herein evidence that there is a continuum of sibling sexual contacts, most of which cannot be easily pigeonholed. We have also shown that a significant number of such sibling experiences have an exploitive character to them, deriving either from the use of force or from the coercion inherent in the age disparity between the partners (often from both).

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FORBIDDEN SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG KIN: A STUDY OF SELF-SELECTED RESPONDENTS

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FEW areas of human behavior and social organization have been so widely theorized about by psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, anthropologists, and biologists as that of incest behavior and incest taboos. (Compare, for example, Durkheim, 1963; Ellis, 1963; Nimkoff, 1961.) Most theorists have held in common that the incest taboo is natural and adaptive, necessary for the maintenance of family structure. Westermarck (1926) claimed

* . . . there is a remarkable absence of erotic feelings between persons living very close together from childhood. Sexual indifference is combined with positive feelings of aversion when the act is thought of. This I take to be the fundamental cause of the exogamous prohibitions.

This notion has been extended by Fox (1963) into a causal chain—childhood propinquity→positive aversion→prohibitions—and used to account for patterns of behavior observed in kibbutz children (Shepher, 1971).

The research reported in this chapter was initiated with the assumption that overt sexual activity between family members is far more common than is generally assumed in the literature. Many of the accepted theories of incest relegate the behavior to the status of an illness or merely an illegal, antisocial act to be dealt with by severe penalty. Incest is thus considered to be deviant behavior, behavior that is taboo

because of the serious negative consequences. We hypothesize, however, that, in practice, the taboo functions less effectively as a deterrent to incest behavior than as a taboo against talking about it and letting the activity be known to others. Therefore, we sought a self-selecting sample who had kept their activity out of the public eye.

Another reason for this research was to obtain information about incest behavior among those who are affluent. The affluent do not normally get arrested for things the lower classes are apt to be arrested for (drugs, possession of stolen property, engaging in illegal sex acts, drunkenness); the same rule applies to incest behavior. There are good opportunities for these affluent respondents to engage in sexual contact with other family members because of the privacy of their sleeping and other living arrangements.

METHODS

Most studies of incest have been based on either correctional or clinical cases, involving offenders who have come to the attention of the police and courts or patients who have come for therapy. Our concern was to locate and question a sample of incest participants who had neither been apprehended nor treated. We suspected that some California incest participants, like some California homosexuals and group sex participants, might be willing to come at least part way "out of the closet." In the Spring of 1972 we ran the following advertisement in the Los Angeles *Free Press* for four consecutive weeks and for shorter periods in several other "underground" Southern California newspapers:

* Two students studying intimate physical contact or forbidden sexual behavior between family members would like your cooperation. Call Carolyn or Maureen (213) xxx-xxxx or xxx-xxxx to arrange for interview or questionnaire. Anonymity assured.

About 90 percent of the replies came from the readers of the *Free Press*, which had a circulation of 103,000, mostly in Southern California.

We had expected a trickle of calls, and we were caught unprepared when the telephone started ringing on the day the first advertisement appeared and continued ringing almost incessantly during the following weeks. It was necessary to hire an answering service and recruit additional interviewers to handle the inundation.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A total of 109 respondents were accepted for the study, of whom 10 were interviewed personally (9 by the first author), 5 submitted questionnaire returns, and the remainder were interviewed by phone.

A common criticism of this type of study is that respondents could distort or even completely fabricate stories, leaving the researchers no means of verification (such as there would be had subjects been arrested or treated). To counter this possibility, we designed the interview schedule carefully to provide multiple cross-checks on respondents' accounts. Any that was not internally consistent was rejected.

The first part of the interview involved personal information including education, occupation and income, race, ethnic background, and the type of neighborhood the individual was raised in. The second part consisted of a complete childhood history as well as the current ages of all childhood family members. We requested information on such family matters as occupation and religion of the parents and their attitudes toward sex and nudity. These details were later compared with the respondent's replies to the last part of the questionnaire, which asked for specific information about intimate relations with family members, such as the ages of all concerned, where the incident(s) occurred, who initiated the activity, and what happened.

If a respondent would not go through the rather boring and sometimes difficult history-taking, the interview was terminated. Respondents refusing to give any personal information were excluded from the study, as were some who failed to keep appointments, failed to return questionnaires, who sounded insincere, and whose background information failed to match current details.

For convenience we divided the 109 respondents into seven primary categories:

Primary Category	No. of Respondents
Sibling contact	33
Group contact with more than one relative	31
Contact with relative outside the nuclear family	16
Discipline or humiliation contact	7
Father-daughter contact	4
Mother-son contact	3
Miscellaneous	15
Total	109

Many respondents, however, reported categories of contact in addition to the primary category; thus, our 109 respondents reported a total of 163 contacts:

IV. SEX IN THE FAMILY

Total Categories	No. of Respondents Reporting This Type of Contact
Sibling contacts	55
Group contact with more than one relative	31
Mother-son	26
Contact with relative outside the nuclear family	21
Father-daughter contact	8
Discipline or humiliation contact	7
Miscellaneous	15
Total	163

We had no specific hypotheses but rather were mainly interested in seeing if the types of people who answered our ad were the same types as were already included in other studies of incest, and, if there was a difference, what constituted the difference. We were especially interested in incest among the affluent middle class.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

A high reported level of education was the chief characteristic of our respondents: 15.6 percent reported at least two years of college, 26.6 percent reported a college degree, and 5.5 percent had done graduate work. They were overwhelmingly white and male. Table 12-1 compares their demography with that of the readership of the *Free Press*, as reported by the newspaper following a telephone survey made two years earlier. There were many similarities.

Most respondents had grown up in a city or suburb, and more than 80 percent described their neighborhood as middle class or better. On the Hollingshead Index of Occupation, 80 percent of the respondents were in the four highest categories and 20 percent in the three lowest. On the Educational Index of Social Position, none of the respondents was in the lowest category and 37.5 percent were in the top two categories.

FAMILIES

Most of the respondents came from families of origin with five or fewer members; their current families were similarly small. Clearly, overcrowding and large family size are not contributing factors here as they have been suggested to be by others (Weinberg, 1955; Maisch,

12. FORBIDDEN SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG KIN

TABLE 12-1. Demographic Comparison of Study Respondent Data and Total *Free Press* Readership

Group	Percent Black	Age Range	Income	Religious Background	Sex
Study respondents	2	60% = 26-45	50% >\$10,000/yr; 16% >\$28,000/yr	90% yes	90% male
<i>Free Press</i> readership	10	28-38 (largest segment of readership)	\$16,500-\$24,000/yr (large segment of readership)	Most affiliated, not practicing	Subscription sales = 50% male; street sales = 70% male

1973). Nine out of ten came from religious backgrounds. Most felt they had a close relationship with their original family; only 13 percent felt distant from their family of origin.

In a large number of cases the respondents mentioned how very physically attractive the family was. A physical description appeared to be important to many respondents, suggesting that there might be a positive relationship between current standards of physical attractiveness and extent of physical contact among family members.

About 40 percent of respondents said their parents verbalized positive attitudes towards sex, but an equal number said sex was never mentioned in the family. Of the families who talked about sex, more were positive than negative in their attitudes. Interestingly, 90 percent of the respondents indicated that nothing was ever specifically said about incest or sexual contacts with relatives. When it was brought up, more of their parents had negative attitudes than positive attitudes toward family contact.

ATTITUDE TOWARD REVEALING THEIR EXPERIENCES

For the most part, respondents kept their incestuous experiences to themselves. Seventy-two percent had never mentioned their family sexual relations to anyone; 20 percent had talked with friends or been discovered by them. Six percent had told their parents or had been discovered by them. The respondents felt that talking about their behavior was very much taboo.

THE INCEST RELATIONSHIPS

Most of the cases reported in our research were sibling relationships. Second to sibling relationships were mother-son, a not-unexpected

finding since most of the sample consisted of heterosexual males. Father-daughter incest was rarely reported. One-fourth of the sample reported incest with both parents, which suggested group sex.

Many of the respondents, 60 percent, said that the other partner initiated the relationship; 24 percent replied that they had initiated it; and 17 percent felt it was mutually initiated. Over half of the respondents had had relationships with older females or males, fewer than a third with younger females or males. Seventeen percent had relationships with both older and younger relatives. Most of the respondents had been between the ages of 10 and 15 at the time of first contact, implying an early introduction to sexuality. About one in six considered the style of the relationship to be one of seduction by an older or younger relative. Nearly half of our respondents considered their sexual interest in relatives to be sex for its own sake; only 6 percent mentioned any romantic involvement.

* Most of the respondents participated in vaginal intercourse. Second to vaginal intercourse were mutual masturbation and oral sex. The least often used form of sexual behavior was anal intercourse. Sexual contact took place frequently. More than a third of respondents involved with parents reported daily contact. Most sibling contact occurred once or twice a week.

SIBLING CONTACTS

Of the 33 respondents in this category, all were male; the sister of one collaborated in the reporting but was not counted as a respondent. Twenty-nine reported contacts with sisters; the other four reported homosexual contacts with brothers. Of these four, one considered himself homosexual and one bisexual; the other two reported that they were heterosexual, but happened to have brothers close at hand at the time of puberty.

At the time of the survey the respondents reporting sibling contact ranged in age from 20 to 57; most of them were in their twenties and thirties—none in their forties.

* Age at the time of first sibling sexual contact ranged from five to 25. Eleven were under 10; fourteen were aged 10 to 19; and eight were between 20 and 25. The age disparity between the siblings having sexual contact ranged from one to ten years; in most cases the disparity was less than six years.

* In some cases, sibling sexual contacts had lasted only for a brief period during childhood or adolescence, but in 15 cases, it had lasted for years and was still continuing at the time of reporting.

How does sibling incest start? For most respondents, sibling sexual contact was the first sexual contact. In only one case, that of two broth-

ers, did it begin with siblings sharing a bed. Two respondents could not recall how it started. Six said it started when they and their siblings were bathing together; five reported it began when one observed the other masturbating—this activity commonly led to conversation about masturbation and then to further sharing of information and mutual explorations. In four cases, incest began after siblings who ordinarily wore bathing suits went skinny-dipping together; the hidden was suddenly brought into view and this opened the door for further mutual exploration. Two respondents reported that casual household nudity and body contact gradually led to curiosity and exploration of gender differences. Two others started with intellectual discussions of sex with siblings and went on to mutual physical exploration. Mutual ignorance and curiosity were common themes in many cases; the siblings shared what they knew and didn't know, each helping the other to learn.

How much harm did the sibling relationship cause? In two cases, one sibling felt excessive guilt that interrupted communication with his sibling sexual partner and produced at least temporary deterioration of the relationship. One man is concerned that his wife is not as experimental and receptive as his sister was, and he worries that he himself is not sufficiently competent or attractive. One respondent reported a compulsion to call strangers on the phone and talk about his relations with his sister (perhaps a way of expressing guilt). Several reported that feelings of guilt were experienced after the first contact but were soon rationalized away. One of the four men who had sexual contact with a brother feared that he had become a sexual pervert because of his enjoyment of the experience. Reports of harm, however, were amazingly few. The respondents generally reported positive feelings about their sibling contacts, and improvement of the sibling relationship; they felt closer and more trusting.

GROUP CONTACTS

Of the 31 respondents in this category, five reported what were in effect group marriages involving continuing group-living arrangements as well as sexual contacts. One *ménage à trois* involved the respondent, his wife, and his sister. Another *ménage à trois* involved the respondent, his wife, and his stepmother (with whom he had had sexual relations since the age of 15). Recently his father had made the group a *ménage à quatre*; thus, what began as secretive sexual get-togethers developed into sexual sharing, with no secrecy except from the outside world. One such extended family involved the respondent, his step-sister, their mates, and their teenage or younger children. In two cases three generations were mutually involved.

All five of the group-marriage relationships were stated as ongoing at the time of reporting, though one of them had shrunk to a brother-sister marriage.

The other 26 respondents in this category reported group-sex activities in which three or more relatives were involved, but which to the respondents, fell short of being group marriage. Among the combinations reported were: three involving a mother, sister, and brother; three with a brother and two sisters; two with mother, father, and son; and two cases of a mother, father, son, and daughter. (One of these last situations was reported by the daughter, who added that she had become pregnant by her father at an early age and had had an abortion. This was the only report of pregnancy by contact with kin in the entire study.) Various other combinations were reported only once, most involving one or more parents with children.

Some of the situations reported involved close contacts with relatives of the same sex. Only one respondent of the 26 who were not part of group marriages considered himself homosexual, and only two considered themselves bisexual; some nervousness about the male-to-male contact was commonly reported. In these cases, the incest taboo was less firmly rooted, or at least more readily cast off, than the male homosexual taboo.

Of the 26 combinations reported, eight were said to be currently ongoing. In some cases, relations were discontinued when various family members left home. In two cases where the sex education of the children was said to be the initial purpose, contacts ceased when the education was deemed complete. Our impression is that in these group-sex situations, as in the sibling situations, little guilt was felt and few harmful results were reported.

CONTACTS WITH RELATIVES OUTSIDE THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

All 16 of these cases were reported by male respondents, ranging in age at the time of the survey from 19 to 40. Legally, some of the contacts would not be considered incest: one respondent, for example, reported an affair with an aunt by marriage, ten years his senior, following her divorce from his uncle. In some families, this relationship might have been accepted; in this family it raised a furor. We have included this and similar cases in our sample because the respondents themselves classified the relationship as incestuous, both by answering our advertisement and by keeping the relationship secret for fear of family or social disapproval.

The relationships these 16 male respondents reported were with aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews. A review of the interviews reveals little of interest, and little harm reported.

DISCIPLINE AND HUMILIATION

* Four of the seven male respondents in this group reported that they were spanked, beaten, urinated on, given enemas, or subjected in other ways to "discipline" or humiliation by an older sister or older sisters in a sexually-laden context. In these four cases, respondents stated that the relationships with their sisters remain good and have continued into adulthood.

The remaining three cases involve sexually oriented discipline and humiliation by an aunt and uncle, by a mother and younger sister, and by a mother. The respondents in these three cases all perceived the relationships as harmful and the effects as long-lasting. Two respondents escaped from home into military service as soon as possible; the third went away to school at the age of 13, and while he reported a desire to return to the relationship, in fact he never did.

✓ Of all the respondents in our survey, those who were involved in discipline and humiliation seemed to feel the most effect in later life. A few felt guilt for feeling enjoyment from those kinds of experiences; some felt anger for being forced to engage in the behavior. Although most of the incidents began when they were young, the effects, mainly seen as harmful, have stayed with them through adulthood. One respondent said he worked on the problem for years before he could let himself get involved in a loving, trusting relationship. Another respondent sought counseling at the suggestion of the interviewer.

FATHER-DAUGHTER CONTACT

Of the four respondents engaging in father-daughter contact, three were males and one female. One of the situations involved a father and his stepdaughter. Three of the four situations had not included coitus at the time of reporting. The ages of the females ranged from five to 18, three of them being young adults.

Two of the three fathers reporting were exhibitionists, which involves a disposition to display what modesty normally conceals and gaining sexual excitement from that exposure. Each has compulsions to exhibit himself in ever-riskier situations. This perhaps has a bearing on their involvement with their own teenage daughters—it is a risky situation to begin with, and the complexity of involvement gets continually greater.

✓ From the reports of these two fathers, the daughters are sexually seductive towards them, and lead them on to ever more sexual contact. The fathers are aware of this, and are concerned that they may be, in effect, pressured or seduced into performing coitus, which (intellectually at least) they do not intend to engage in. In one case the father has a good relationship with the wife and he does not fear coital se-

duction by the daughter. He related, a week after his initial interview, that he arrived home unexpectedly from a business trip to find the mother and daughter having sexual activities together in the bedroom. The daughter had seduced the mother several weeks previously, and although the parents were embarrassed, the daughter was pleased that the father had found them because "now we can all do it together." *

The one female respondent was a young woman who said that she had been having sexual contact with her parents for several years. It was, at the time of reporting, a three-way contact involving her father, mother, and her. She had a brother who would have liked to be involved, but for some reason the rest of the family did not find him sexually attractive. He is older and has moved away from home. The daughter has a nice relationship with her parents, but does not necessarily intend to keep it up as a group marriage as she gets older.

One of the big concerns in the discussing of father-daughter incest is the breakdown of family discipline. All the respondents said that there had been no such breakdown and that, in all areas other than sex, the father and mother were the final authorities. *

Although in only one case was there coitus with the daughter, it appeared that the most serious problems were those of underlying exhibitionism on the part of the two fathers. One had undergone therapy but found that it had little effect. The other was urged by us to seek some kind of help as he was uncomfortable about what he might eventually do with his daughter beyond exhibiting himself.

MOTHER-SON CONTACT

There were only three male respondents who reported sexual relationships with their mothers, outside of those contacts already reported involving group sexual activity. In two of the cases it was the biological mother, in the other case a stepmother. In each case the mother was the aggressor. The biological mothers were 35 and 40 years old when they approached their 14-year-old sons and initiated close physical relationships consisting of touching and oral contact, but no coitus. Sexual instruction was a motivating factor. The relationships ended when the sons were around 18 years old.

The stepmother did not enter into the family until the son was already 29 and she 32. Their contact included intercourse and also had romantic love overtones, which were not present in the other two cases. In none of the cases did the father know of the contact between mother and son. No negative effects were reported. *

MISCELLANEOUS

✓ This category includes 15 respondents with interests in such matters as cross-dressing, transsexualism, silicone injections, sex with animals,

and voyeurism, all somehow also involving incestuous contact. In these cases the type of behavior was of more importance to the respondent than the kin contact, which appears to be incidental, therefore, this category will not be discussed in detail.

CONCLUSIONS

Incest behavior occurs in an atmosphere of secrecy. Many of our respondents came from families where sex was not mentioned, as if it did not exist. Very few ever talked about their incest experiences. The taboo that failed to prevent the behavior did, however, successfully block communication about it. (As has been noted, in one family a daughter maintained sexual relations with both her mother and her father, neither of whom knew of the other involvement until the father accidentally discovered the mother and daughter in bed.) In situations where guilt developed, it often appeared to be related to the secrecy in the relationship, as if anything that demanded so much secrecy from the rest of the family must be bad. As indicated in studies of social nudism (Hartman et al., 1971), secrets shared by a family but kept from the general public can have a positive and binding effect on family relationships. In the present study, in those families who were open, engaging in group marriage or extended-family situations, relationships were trusting and secure. Indeed, 80 percent of all respondents reported positive feelings toward the relative(s) with whom incest had occurred. Of those, however, one-third also felt guilty and attributed their feelings to societal views of incest as wrong. (One-fifth of all respondents concurred that incest is wrong.) *

If our study does nothing else, it shows the dangers of generalizing about incest from incarcerated or otherwise preselected populations (those in therapy, for instance). We admit that there are also dangers in extrapolating from self-selected populations who are willing to share anonymously with another person a bit of previous experience. But if we were to generalize from this study, we should say that, Westermarck notwithstanding, erotic feelings do exist among children reared together, and sexual relations with siblings or other close relatives can provide a satisfactory method for children to satisfy their initial sexual curiosity. Contact between parents and children can sometimes offer the child a well-rounded introduction to sexual functioning in a secure and nonthreatening environment. Respondents claimed no difficulty in the maintenance of social order or discipline in the family. In those cases where a parent and child had sexual contact, some favoritism was reported to have developed. (One wonders, however, which came first, sex or favoritism?) But outside of the sexual setting, previously established patterns were continued. Family functioning is one form of role playing, and adaptive individuals learn the intent of the roles in

the family, just as they do for their vocation or for social organization. Rather than contributing to disorganization, the incestuous relationships led to increased feelings of closeness for more than half of our respondents.

We would consider hypothesizing that the abhorrence of contact with kin is strictly a social prohibition that has little to do with practice. It may have been a practical taboo in the past, when inbreeding could not otherwise be avoided, but with the advent of birth control the situation has changed and sexual contact is recognized as desirable for reasons other than procreation. We would not condone incest if it is coercive or used by one member of the family in a power struggle, just as we would not condone other behavior used in that way. It appears, however, that where incestuous relations do not do harm and have some positive aspects for those involved, the taboo should be played down rather than built up.

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THE IMPACT OF INCEST: FACTORS IN SELF-EVALUATION

JOAN A. NELSON

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

All research is at some level personally motivated; this study was no exception. In view of the controversial nature of the subject, I feel the reader is entitled to know some of the personal factors involved in the research reported in this chapter.

This study was motivated in part by a strong personal need to know the "truth" about incest. When I was a child I experienced an ongoing incestuous relationship that seemed to me to be caring and beneficial in nature. There were love and healthy self-actualization in what I perceived to be a safe environment. I remember it as perhaps the happiest period in my life. Suddenly one day I discerned from playground talk at school that what I was doing might be "bad." Fearing that I might, indeed, be a "bad" person, I went to my mother for reassurance. The ensuing traumatic incidents of that day inaugurated a 30-year period of psychological and emotional dysfunction that reduced family communication to mere utilitarian process and established severe limits on my subsequent developmental journey.

While acknowledging this personal desire to know if there is a "truth" about incest, I have made every attempt to eliminate, or at least minimize, the influence of the personal nature of this research on the data analysis.

This study attempts to explore the various forms of family incest-

Based on the author's master's thesis project at Antioch College. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Larry Constantine in the analysis and reporting of this research.

tuous behavior—from coercive, abusive incest to consensual intrafamily sexual experiences—and to examine the attitudes toward the incest as reported by the participants.

Research on incest has generally been limited to identified clinical cases (Herman and Hirschman, 1976) and criminal cases (DeFrancis, 1969). The present survey was an exploratory, descriptive study intended to reach nonpatient, nonoffender subjects as well as victims and offenders. It was designed to determine whether incest is always perceived negatively by the participants and what factors might contribute to the negativity or positivity of perception.

The research did uncover a significant percentage of incest-affected respondents who would not have been included in any criminal or clinical incest records, many of whom had incest experiences of a non-damaging nature and were able to integrate the experiences into their lives in spite of the extreme social condemnation of incest behavior.

STUDY DESIGN AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The survey results are based on data from responses to classified advertisements placed in *Psychology Today*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *New York Times*, *New Age*, *San Francisco Sentinel*, *Association for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter*, *Berkeley Barb*, and *Bay Guardian* (listed in order of responses produced). The ad was worded as follows. "Research Project: Looking for people who have had incest experience (good or bad) for questionnaire and/or interview. Write P.O. Box ____."

Respondents were also obtained through a personal referral letter passed by hand and as a result of personal contacts and word-of-mouth referral. San Francisco and the Bay Area supplied the most respondents (41); 21 were from the Midwest; and the remainder were roughly evenly divided among the northeast (13), southeast (9), southwest (12), and northwest (8). In all, then, 104 individuals were respondents in this study.

Each subject-respondent, guaranteed anonymity, generally completed the questionnaire or interview with great care and freely gave names and addresses for follow-up. Each was promised a copy of the study results. The follow-through response was very high (92.5 percent). This was due, in part, to the self-selection factor. All interviews were completed and of the questionnaires requested and mailed out, only eight were not returned.

* There are many possible explanations for a subject to fail to return a questionnaire that he or she has taken the trouble to write away for, including psychological and/or emotional resistance to the content.

Many who did respond reported personal emotional conflict engendered by the recounting of their experiences for the study.

The questionnaire comprised a series of questions dealing with basic personal and demographic data and information about the incestuous relationship: background, participants, duration, type of behavior, amount of force used (if any), emotional impact at the time and in retrospect, perceived rewards and drawbacks, and, finally, the importance or effect of the experience on the respondent's life.

An evaluation team of three (a statistics professor, a social worker, and an intern in a sexual abuse treatment program) consensually rated the subjective evaluations and statements for data processing. They eliminated four cases as inconsistent or possibly fraudulent, leaving data from 73 questionnaires and 27 interviews to be transcribed onto questionnaire forms for analytical consistency.

It was realized that the sampling would be biased in that it would draw from a predominantly middle-class, educated population. Moreover, some distortion and memory error are inevitable in a descriptive study of this kind. Yet significant trends and tendencies were revealed.

Essential tasks for the project were to clarify and redefine incest in a broad, workable manner and to identify issues important to the participants in their adult lives. The subjects themselves were asked to define incest by selecting among categories of activities and intrafamilial relationships, both heterosexual and homosexual. Relationships defined by subjects to be incestuous included those between parents and children, between siblings, and between children and other near relatives or surrogates, such as stepparents and foster parents—in other words, between children and anyone who was perceived as, or played the role of, a parent or other family figure, however indirectly or temporarily. Given the current social trend toward increasing numbers of reconstituted and extended families, it was clearly necessary to include nonconsanguinous relationships, since the family dynamics appear to be the same as in blood-related incest. The interpersonal factors are deemed to be the most crucial.

All respondents were 19 or older at the time of the survey, the oldest a 73-year-old man reporting an incident that occurred when he was 15. Women reported initial incestuous contacts occurring at ages as young as 3 and as old as 32, men, from 6 to 50. Six percent of the women were lesbians; one of them had had incest with a female, while the others had been abused in heterosexual incest. Fourteen percent of the men were homosexual; half had had incest with males and the other half with females. The high proportion of homosexual respondents

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was related to the high proportion of ads placed in the San Francisco Bay area, some of them in publications for homosexuals.

The one hundred respondents reported a total of 137 separate incestuous relationships. Forty-six female respondents reported incest with 65 different partners, and 54 males reported relationships with 72 partners. The mean age of the women at the time of the incest was 15; the mean age of the men was 22.

Of the 99 respondents who reported highest educational attainment, 8 had obtained or were earning Ph.D.s, 12 had obtained or were earning master's degrees, and 17 had obtained bachelor's degrees; 24 had some college and 38 had completed only high school or less.

FINDINGS

Consistent with most previous research on incest (Meiselman, 1978), the most commonly reported incestuous relationships were between fathers (or father surrogates) and daughters. Of the 60 such relationships in this study, 37 were reported by the daughters. Sibling relationships were a close second: 32 reported by males, 23 by females. Only three mother-son relationships were reported. Six instances of father-son incest were reported. Four relationships involved grandparents and grandchildren. The remaining experiences were with more distant relatives. A detailed accounting by type of relationship and age at first incest experience is given in Table 13-1.

Subjects were given a list of activities from which they could indicate those in which they had participated. Fondling, the most frequently reported activity, was checked by 94 of the 100 respondents; in 24 instances it was the only specific act noted, the subjects responding to the survey on the basis of this foreplay activity alone. Manual stimulation was checked by 84 of the subjects, vaginal sex by 56, oral-genital sex by 53, and anal sex by 37. Under the category of "other," people mentioned kissing, masturbating, exhibitionism, sucking nipples, simulated intercourse, and urination games.

In 40 (29 percent) of the relationships reported, force or abuse was indicated. Fifty-four (39 percent) of the incest experiences were described in negative terms: 73 (53 percent) were described as positive, and 10 (8 percent) were judged incapable of evaluation by either the subjects or the evaluation team.

Six respondents reported group sex in the family. Eighteen reported incest with more than one family member, in either a group or a one-to-one setting. The high percentage of positive reports may be partly attributable to the inclusion of these groups and multiple family member statistics.

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TABLE 13-1. Relationship and Age at First Incest Experience

Relationship	Number	Average Age at Time of Initial Incest Experience*
Daughters with fathers	26	7
Fathers with daughters	15	32
Stepdaughters with stepfathers	10	13
Stepfathers with stepdaughters	6	31
Foster fathers with foster daughters	2	23
Foster daughter with foster father	1	7
Sisters with brothers	19	10
Brothers with sisters	13	12
Foster sisters with foster brothers	2	8
Foster brothers with foster sisters	2	11
Stepsister with stepbrother	1	12
Stepbrother with stepsister	1	6
Brothers with brothers	13	13
Foster brothers with foster brothers	2	10
Stepbrother with stepbrother	1	10
Foster sister with foster sister	1	10
Sons with mothers	2	18
Stepson with stepmother	1	15
Sons with fathers	3	11
Foster son with foster father	1	10
Stepson with stepfather	1	11
Father with son	1	37
Granddaughter with grandfather	1	6
Grandson with grandmother	1	24
Grandfather with granddaughter	1	50
Grandfather with grandson	1	48
Nieces with uncles	2	13
Uncle with niece	1	32
Nephew with aunt	1	14
Aunt with nephew	1	22
Male cousin with female cousin	1	23
Female cousin with male cousin	1	10
Male cousins with male cousins	2	10

* Ages are approximated in some instances because respondents could not recall exact ages.

For the purpose of the study, each relationship in the case of group or multiple relationships has been counted separately.

It is possible to count 23 of the 100 subject-respondents as reporting no damage or harm whatever from their incestual experiences. Three failed to address the issue of such problems, the remainder reported problems of varying degree, from mild discomfort to severe disturbance. Many of those who reported problems indicated that their incestuous relationships had included use of power, such as physical beating, inducements, promises, and seduction. Many felt they had been trapped in relationships they did not enjoy. Others reported problems with self-image and primary relationship dysfunction later in life, which they felt to be associated with having been involved in incest. Many who described consensual, positive sexual experiences nevertheless reported problems regarding family and community opinion—guilt, shame, fear of discovery, and feelings of isolation.

Regarding the feelings toward the other person at the time of the incest, the most frequently checked word was *warmth*, which was mentioned in the context of both positive and negative reports. Less frequently checked emotions were, successively, *compassion*, *sympathy*, *love*, *fear*, *joy*, *contempt*, and, least often, *hate*. Considering the incest experience itself, respondents most frequently indicated feeling *glad*, although the next most frequently checked reactions were *guilt*, *shame*, and *anger*, successively. *Joy* and *sorrow* were least often checked.

The most commonly cited reasons for termination of the relationship were *changes in life-style*, *fear of discovery*, and *fear of social disapproval*, followed by *respondent found unpleasant*, *partner found unpleasant*, and *actual discovery*. Incarceration of respondents or partners and death of partners were also mentioned.

EVALUATION OF THE INCEST EXPERIENCES

Of the 137 incest relationships reported by respondents, more than half were evaluated positively. From Table 13-2 it becomes clear that, overall, males were substantially more likely to evaluate their experiences positively than were females. Only slightly more than one-fourth of the relationships reported by female respondents were evaluated as positive. Male respondents were, on the average, older at the time of the incest; therefore, it is useful to separate out age as a factor contributing to outcome. Table 13-3 reveals a relationship between age and the respondent's assessment of the experience. Only 18 percent of experiences prior to age 10 were evaluated positively. Forty-two percent of experiences of preteens were evaluated positively, and for young teenagers the proportion rises to 60 percent. Among older teens

TABLE 13-2. Self-Evaluation of Incest Experience by Males and Females

Sex	Positive	Uncertain*	Negative
Males	56	4	12
Females	17	6	42

*Judged incapable of evaluation by either the subject or the evaluation team.

and adults, the fraction is 85 percent. This trend holds for female respondents and males taken separately. The same table uncovers an exception to the general rule: that more males than females reported positive experiences, although a higher proportion of late-teen females were positive.

When the respondent was the older partner in the incest liaison, the experience was more likely to be reported positively, as shown in Table 13-4. However, in only one case was a female respondent the older partner; therefore, it is not possible from these data to separate out the effects of the sex of the respondent from whether the respondent was the older or younger partner. Looking at the data from males only, then, it becomes clear that gender is not a sufficient explanation in itself.

A smaller proportion of the experiences of males who were the younger partners were reported as positive (62 percent compared with 87 percent) than was reported for males who were the older partner. It would seem safe to assert that incest is much less favorable viewed by the younger partner than by the older one, regardless of gender. This relationship in the data is confounded, however, by the fact that the average age of the younger partner is also a function of the type of incest relationship. For example, the average age of girls reporting incest with fathers or father surrogates was only about 7½, while the age of those reporting incest with brothers was nearly 10.

The tendency for incest experience to be reported positively more

TABLE 13-3. Self-Evaluations of Incest Experiences by Age at Experience

Age	Positive		Uncertain*		Negative	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Under 10 (33)	4	2	0	1	1	25
10-12 (38)	15	1	0	2	6	14
13-15 (20)	7	5	2	2	1	3
16-19 (13)	4	7	0	1	1	0
Over 20 (33)	26	2	2	0	3	0

* Judged incapable of evaluation by either the subject or the evaluation team.

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TABLE 13-4. Self-Evaluation of Incest Experience by Older and Younger Participants, Male and Female

Participants	Positive	Uncertain*	Negative
Older male	40	2	4
Older female	0	1	0
Younger male	16	2	8
Younger female	17	5	42

* Judged incapable of evaluations by either the subject or the evaluation team.

often at higher ages, when the subject is the older of two partners and when the subject is male, is consistent with a conventional view of sexual behavior, with the initiative usually presumed to be taken by the male and by the older partner. Females older than their partners who were the initiators in incest are probably fewer in number as a result of social conditioning, which militates against female initiative and sexual aggressiveness and also may inhibit self-reporting of such behavior.

* It is generally believed that all adult-child sexual relations are bad and that for incest, particularly, sexual contact across generations is likely to be more damaging than is sibling incest. Finkelhor in particular (1979, and Chapter 11 in this volume) has focused on the age difference between partners as the criterion for defining abusive relationships. Table 13-5 reports evaluations for adult-child and peer relationships separately. For both types of relationships, the older partner is substantially more likely than the younger partner to consider the experience as having been positive. However, it should be noted that while only slightly more than 25 percent of younger partners in adult-child situations reported positive evaluations, exactly half of the younger partners in peer relationships saw their experiences as positive. Thus, it is not the matter of evaluation by older versus younger partner alone that accounts for positive reports, but the question of age differences between partners as well.

TABLE 13-5. Self-Evaluations of Incest Experiences by Older vs. Younger Partners in Adult-Child and Peer Relations

Partner	Adult-Child Relations: Number Reporting			Peer Relations: Number Reporting		
	Positive	Uncertain*	Negative	Positive	Uncertain*	Negative
Older	22	2	2	18	1	2
Younger	14	3	36	19	4	14

* Judged incapable of evaluation by either the subject or the evaluation team.

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Respondents' evaluations of their experiences were also related to the specific sexual activity. Fewer than half of coital incest experiences were reported as positive (19 of 40), but 62 percent of non-coital experiences were said to be positive (49 of 79), the remaining cases could not be classified.

A panel of judges independently evaluated the reports for the presence of exploitation, based on the use of power or objectification of the partner. Respondents were identified as victims in an exploitive experience, exploiters, or participants in a nonexploitive experience. Victims and exploiters were almost equally likely to describe their experiences positively (8 of 26 experiences reported by the victims and 9 of 28 reported by the exploiters). But more than three-quarters of non-exploitive incidents were reported as positive. As other investigators have found (see Chapter 17), participants in incest often feel guilt after their experiences even if they are victims of exploitation. This study found that victims were substantially more likely than exploiters to feel guilt. More than half of victims but only one of 28 exploiters felt guilty about their incest experience.

In another approach to the issue of self-evaluation, subjects were asked whether or not they would repeat the incest experience, knowing what they knew about it at the time of completing the interview or questionnaire. In general, the responses were a function of age at the time of the experience and were nearly identical to those in Table 13-3. Ten respondents who evaluated their experiences positively nevertheless indicated that they would not repeat the experience. Of the 63 respondents who were certain they would not want to repeat the experience, many had been little girls who felt they had had no choice but who, with adult hindsight, would not want to repeat the experience.

Table 13-6 indicates that the majority of responses in this study dealt with long-term incestuous relationships. Twelve of the relationships were still going on at the time of the survey and are included in the data on length of time elapsed at the time of report. No relationship was found between duration of the experience and positive or negative evaluation of it; the percentage of positive reports is nearly the same in all categories, ranging from a low of 48 percent for relationships enduring more than four years to a high of 69 percent for those lasting three to four years.

FAMILY AND PERSONAL DYNAMICS

Several incest "carriers" were identified in the survey. These are people who come from families-of-origin in which incest occurred, and who knowingly or unknowingly set up incest situations as adults. In

TABLE 13-6. Self-Evaluation of Incest by Duration of Experience

Duration of Experience	Positive	Uncertain*	Negative	Totals
One time only	6	1	4	11
10 or fewer times	5	1	3	9
Under 6 mo	4	1	3	8
6 mo-1 yr	7	1	4	12
1-2 yr	12	1	7	20
2-3 yr	16	3	14	33
3-4 yr	9	0	4	13
over 4 yr	13	1	13	27
Did not report	1	1	2	4

* Judged incapable of evaluation by either the subject or the evaluation team.

our survey, they were usually mothers with low self-esteem, living in dysfunctional family settings. There were several who had had what they perceived to be positive incest with one family member, and who repeated the experience with other relatives. *

It is often thought that incest occurs in families where there is disruption or pathology. In this study there were only 10 instances where family breakdown was reported and nine in which it was inferred by the evaluation assistants. Although no particular question addressed this issue, the questions were designed to elicit such information, if it was there. Family breakdown never appeared as a result of the incest without being recognized as existing before the event. Although the evaluation team agreed it was impossible to find a direct measure of family dysfunction, they also agreed that approximately one-third of the subjects reported incest occurring in family settings that would otherwise be considered to be functional, normal, and healthy. Actual family breakup was reported by five respondents, caused by institutionalization of a parent or by divorce or separation. One of these respondents reported the incest involved as positive and consensual; in the other four it was regarded as negative and as a symptom of the family breakdown rather than a cause. *

From their comments on the questionnaires and during interviews, many of the respondents appeared to be still working out conflicts in regard to their incest experiences, some of which had terminated many years past. Some told of years of personal struggle in order to assimilate the experience into their lives. It is significant for those in the human services professions that only one of these 100 incest situations was ever reported to police. Nine had been reported to friends and relatives only and 20 to psychiatrists or professional counselors only;

seven respondents said they had told both friends or relatives and professional helpers. On some questionnaires the question was answered unclearly. At least 53 of the 100 respondents had never sought help, at the time of incest or later, either professionally or by turning to a friend's guidance, and had never told spouses or other intimate partners.

A number of respondents thought that incest laws should be changed to allow consensual relationships because they felt that rape laws adequately covered prosecution of criminal or abusive incest. But others recommended stiffer penalties for child abusers. *

This phenomenon indicates a serious and possibly damaging result of long-held social attitudes and current legal reporting requirements as they apply to helping professionals. Although many of the people who did not report their incest experiences were not in conflict regarding the incest, others, in the midst of intense personal struggle, feared turning to anyone for help because of threat of punishment, incarceration, or social condemnation of themselves or loved ones. *

CONCLUSION

As is true for more accepted sexual relationships, incest is more practiced than understood. It will not be understood rationally as long as we continue to cloak it in the attitudes and language of taboo.

Whether acknowledged or not, erotic feelings and needs exist within families. Sometimes these feelings are misunderstood, suppressed, or acted out inappropriately. At other times they are perceived as healthy responses to normal life situations and are acted upon or not, according to individuals' social or moral judgment. Often feelings associated with the incest situation are the cause of confusion and family dysfunction. There is always the guilty knowledge that one has broken, or thought about breaking, a serious taboo, whether or not the sexual desire is acted out or the experience is beneficial or damaging.

It is impossible to draw definitive cause-and-effect conclusions regarding the significance of age, gender, type of sex activity, duration, and personal evaluations of incest experiences from information obtained from the limited sample and methods utilized in this study. However, definite trends in these data do indicate possible contribution factors to the impact of incest. When incest occurs at an early age or with a partner of an older generation, it appears to be substantially more likely to be a negative experience. That the younger partner, even in essentially peer relationships, is more likely to have a negative experience suggests that issues of power and freedom of choice are

factors in participants' evaluations of the experience. Finally, that the majority of older teenagers of both sexes could consider their incest experience to be positive certainly challenges conventional assumptions.

This study was intended to frame critical issues surrounding contemporary incest practices and to stimulate further investigations. We now know it is possible to locate and study nonclinical, noncriminal incest situations and that, in such populations, not all instances of incest are negative or damaging.

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V

EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL EXPERIENCES

PERHAPS the most crucial concern of adults in the area of child sexuality is the effects of early sexual experiences on children—both at the time they occur and in terms of the children's later adult functioning. Eventually it will be necessary to be able to answer the question of such effects in the broadest sense and in the finest particulars of type of experience, antecedents, and context. For now, however, we must be content with research focused on certain "irregular" experiences that have been of principal concern. The first three chapters of this section report new findings on the impact of sexual encounters with adults. Ingram's subjects in Chapter 14 were boys brought for counseling, among whom were many who had had homosexual experiences with adults. The "sexual offenses" are described in relation to the boys' family situations. Bernard, in Chapter 15, has aggregated a sample of sexual autobiographies from people who, as children, had experiences with pedophiles. Chapter 16 describes how Tsai and colleagues advertised for subjects and conducted a comparison study among those

who had been molested as children and had at some time sought psychotherapy or counseling; those who had had such experiences but who had never been in counseling or therapy; and a control group of nonmolested subjects. The section closes with Chapter 17, an extensive review by Constantine of research literature on the social and psychosexual effects of childhood incest experiences or sexual encounters with adults.

PARTICIPATING VICTIMS: A STUDY OF SEXUAL OFFENSES WITH BOYS

MICHAEL INGRAM

IT has been noted in recent years (Gibbons and Prince, 1963; Mohr, Turner and Jerry, 1964; Burton, 1968; and particularly Virkunen, 1975) that the legal distinction between assailant and victim is not always appropriate in cases of sexual contact between child and adult and that a child may willingly participate in or even invite sexual contact.

* Cases that come to the notice of the police are more likely than not to be cases of forced assault on an unwilling child, and evidence for psychological trauma resulting from sexual contact is almost always drawn from cases where there has been a violent reaction to either the offense, police investigation, court appearance, medical examination, or parental rage or hysteria. My first encounter with cases of boys being 'indecently assaulted' puzzled me as a student of child counseling. I was asked to counsel traumatized children who had eventually a totally different reaction from that of their parents, or the moral welfare committee. They regarded the experience with a certain robustness, if not relish, and that started me thinking about the problem in a new light. Thirteen years later I have collected notes on ninety-two children, and present them here. My collection may not be typical, for reasons given, but I think the conclusions, while needing confirmation by further research, may well be valid.

Literature on this subject is sparse. Usually it is limited to cases drawn from hospital files, and is confusing in that no distinction is

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