

# *The Cause of Child Sexual Abuse<sup>1/</sup>*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The cause of child sexual abuse is not unique to the Archdiocese or the Province (St. Johns, Newfoundland). It is a significant social problem that afflicts all societies and cultures, though it is only in relatively recent years that the range and dimensions of the problem have come top light. Consequently, there is still much that is not definitely known about the causes of child sexual abuse, and much is yet to be learned about its control and elimination.

Because the Commission was not able to undertake a psychological assessment of either the offenders or the victims, conclusive determinations about them have not been possible. Instead, the Commission has had to rely for its conclusions on what it was able to learn about the offenders and victims in the Archdiocese, and on what it knows about offenders and victims from the most recent literature on the subject. This paper defines many of the terms and concepts related to the problem, and provides an overview of child sexual abuse.

## **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

- ◆ **Child Sexual Abuse.** Different people – even with similar interests and points of view – use different words to talk about the crime with which this report is chiefly concerned. In this Report the Commission has chosen to use the term *child sexual abuse* for several reasons. It is not only the term most widely used locally by professionals, the media and the public, but it is also the term that covers a wide range of abusive experiences, unlike *molestation*, which is more limited in the kind of act it describes. So, although the term *child sexual abuse* is used in this Report, other words used in the literature about this kind of problem often signify approximately the same thing.

Defining Child sexual abuse is often more difficult than agreeing upon a name for it. This is partly because there are several different dimensions to such abuse, such as legal, psychological, social and moral. Thus, while some definitions emphasize the legal and moral implications of the child's or adolescent's inability to understand the implications of a sexual act, other definitions emphasize the effects of such experiences on the physical, intellectual and emotional well-being of the victim.

The Canadian justice system, too, defines several sexual crimes in various ways, and judicial response to these crimes also varies according to the type of act and the age of the victim – the legal age ranging from 14 to 18 years.

A useful working definition of child sexual abuse was developed by the British Standing Committee on Sexual Abuse of Children. It says, in part:

*Any child below the age of consent may be deemed to have been sexually abused when a sexually mature person has, by design or by neglect of their usual societal responsibilities in relation to the child, engaged or permitted the engagement of that child in any activity of a sexual nature that is intended to lead to the sexual gratification of the sexually mature person. This definition pertains whether or not this activity involves explicit coercion by any means, whether or not it involves genital or physical contact, whether or not initiated by the child, or whether or not there is discernible harmful outcome in the short term.*

Because the concern of the Commission is more specific than this definition, which describes wide-spread abuse in society in general, the Report will concentrate on the abuses that occurred under those circumstances outlined earlier.

The focus of this Report is thus restricted to the involvement of male children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual activity with members of the Roman Catholic clergy. The Commission also recognizes that such sexual activity between a child or adolescent and a member of the clergy

involves an abuse of power and betrayal of trust in such a way that the victim is unable to give informed consent for participating in such acts. It is consequently a profound violation of the personhood of the victim.

- ◆ **Sex Offenders.** The term *sex offender* is used in this report to designate the perpetrator of these acts because it is the designation used in the Terms of Reference of this Commission, and it is also the label most often used in the literature about child sexual abuse.

The term *sex offender* also emphasizes that the act is an offence with legal consequences, and encourages consideration of the similarities among different kinds of offenders rather than their differences. *Child molester* may encourage the image of the stereotypical, but rare, abuser – the old man in a dirty coat who fondles young children, while *pedophile* denotes a too exclusive category of offenders, and it also reflects a narrow psychiatric view of child sexual abuse. Such a view in itself may contribute to a kind of acceptance of the abuse because it makes it easier to dismiss the offenders as sick, “not like the rest of us,” and probably untreatable.

Further, *pedophilia* and *pedophile* are terms that are generally overused, and sometimes wrongly, both in the literature by professionals and by the general public. The German psychiatrist, Kraft-Ebring, coined the term *pedophilia* in the late nineteenth century to describe a psychosexual perversion in which an adult is erotically attracted to children. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* defines the term as “recurrent, intense, involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child.”

- ◆ **Types of Abusive Acts.** Abusive acts fall into two general categories: non-contact abuse and contact abuse.
  - *Non-contact* abuse refers to encounters that do not involve physical interaction, e.g.: exhibitionism, voyeurism, solicitations or threats. Although these acts may be isolated and the offender may do nothing more, they may also be part of a process of seduction leading up to contact abuse.
  - *Contact abuse* includes all activities that involve interaction between the offender and the victim. This kind of abuse may involve touching, fondling or actual penetration. Again, all such acts can occur singly, in conjunction with other activities, or as part of a progression. The actions perpetrated on the victims in this report may have begun with non-contact abuse, but soon progressed to include kissing, fondling, masturbation, oral-genital contact and anal penetration.

Usually, in both categories of abusive acts, the perpetrator is male, and is a parent, another relative, a friend, a neighbor, or – less often – a stranger, but this report focuses on a particular kind of offender: priests. These are adults who were known to their victims and had with them a *fiduciary* relationship. This is a relationship of trust and faith where the victim depends on the offender for his spiritual well-being, as a patient might depend and trust in a medical doctor for his physical health.

## EXTENT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

There is general agreement that it is impossible to determine the full extent of child sexual abuse in society, but data on both *incidence* and *prevalence* are used to give at least some indication of the magnitude of the problem.

- ◆ **Incidence.** This is based on the number of new cases of child sexual abuse in a given period of time, usually one year. Attempts to determine incidences are usually based on the number of cases reported to various agencies, such as police, hospitals or child protection agencies. In Canada in 1988 there were nearly 30,000 reports of sexual assaults, and there may have been another 40,000 sexual assaults that were not reported.
- ◆ **Prevalence.** This is defined as the proportion of the population that has been sexually abused during their childhood. Data about prevalence is usually obtained by conducting random surveys

of the general population, or of particular groups within the general population, e.g., college students.

Determining the actual prevalence of abuse is difficult, though, because as the *Report on the Committee on Sexual Offenses against Children and Youth* (the Bagley Commission, 1984) has indicated, as many as three out of four female victims and nine out of ten male victims keep their abuse secret. Nonetheless, that report found that in Canada 50% of females and 33% of males experienced unwanted sexual acts at some time in their lives, and 80% of these acts occurred before the age of 21.

Although the rate of reporting varies from study to study, the research on the subject suggests that underreporting is typical. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the dimensions of the child sexual abuse problem in this Archdiocese, as in all other parts of society, are not fully known.

Within Newfoundland and Labrador, statistics from the provincial Department of Social Services indicate that reports of child sexual abuse increased annually from 17 cases in 1981 to 885 cases by 1988/89 – more than a 5,000% increase. In the Easter region alone, an area geographically similar to the Archdiocese of St. John's, child sexual abuse reporting increased from 252 cases in 1986 to 445 cases in 1988. But as drastic as this increase in reported sexual abuse has been, it is still difficult to ascertain whether the incidence of child sexual abuse has actually increased. As we have seen, most acts are not reported, and the willingness of some individuals to tell their stories, and the high levels of media interest these disclosures have received, may be encouraging others to divulge what they thought were private and isolated violations.

## CONTEXT

To comprehend the nature of child sexual abuse, and the basis of many of the conclusions arrived at in this Report, it is necessary to understand the broader social context within which such abuse occurs, and why it is often not acknowledged. The discussion that follows often speaks jointly of the position of women and children in society. This is because throughout most of history, the two groups have usually been treated in similar ways by both society in general and by legal systems in particular. The social order has been governed almost exclusively by adult males (patriarchy), and all others, whether women or children, who do not belong to this class, have tended to be dominated by it in a similar way. Until relatively recent times, for instance, in many countries a woman's right of ownership and her legal status were equal to those of a child; and even the traditional wedding ceremony still demands the wife's promise to obedience to her husband, a promise that comes just after she has been "given away" by her father.

- ◆ **Historical Factors.** The historical origins of society have played a significant role in determining what society is today – in this country, province and Archdiocese. About child sexual abuse, specifically, history reveals here important themes:
  - Abusive practices toward children have long existed, in varying degrees, within ordinary, accepted social behavior.
  - Denial of existence and significance of child sexual abuse has persisted throughout history.
  - The dominance of patriarchal values throughout history has denigrated the rights of both women and children.

Acts of child sexual abuse, too, go back to antiquity, and are described in the earliest historical accounts, captured in the most ancient clay markings. One 5,000-year-old tablet, for instance, reveals an encounter in which a goddess protests intercourse because her body is too small. Some early Greek cultures advocated and encouraged sexual relationships between mature and immature males, a practice known as *pederasty*. The Old Testament and the Talmud, for instance, provide many references to women and children as property. The concept of *patria potestas* dominated civil and criminal law in Roman society for centuries; wives, slaves and children were considered possessions of males.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century reforms began to occur, and although the possibility of child rape was acknowledged, ten years was the age that a child could legally consent to sex. History records offenders being freed because a rape had taken place shortly after the victim's tenth birthday.

During the Industrial Revolution, there was considerable disruption in the older ways of life as more and more people rural communities and moved to towns and cities to work for wages. Family structure changed in response to new divisions of labor; children were exploited in factories and worked under abominable conditions, often even worse than those described in the 19<sup>th</sup> century novels of Charles Dickens. Records of the time also indicate an increase in sexual assaults on children and in the number of children becoming involved in prostitution.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sigmund Freud's theories had profound effect on societal attitudes towards children. His theory of Oedipus Complex (Oedipus is a character in Greek literature who unknowingly married his own mother) postulated that every child between three and six years of age goes through a stage during which he or she desires the parent of the opposite sex. As a result, many reports of child sexual abuse were discounted altogether, or the blame was placed on the victim, and not on the offending adult. This denial or blaming the victim continues to be part of a response to child sexual abuse, even outside the applications of psychotherapy.

Child sexual abuse began to surface as a real issue of public concern only during the 1940s, and then it was deemed an aberration proceeding from the loosening of sexual values and the disruptiveness of two world wars. And it was not considered a problem of major concern within the family. Rather, it was believed that abusers were primarily strangers, not parents, trusted friends or respected members of the community. Prevention, treatment services or research into the causes and effects of child sexual abuse were virtually non-existent.

In an important research project undertaken from 1938 to 1949, Dr. Alfred Kinsey discovered a high incidence of child sexual abuse in American society. However, the study underestimated the seriousness of the impact of child sexual abuse on the victim, and again, placed the blame on the victim, the child.

Current recognition of the nature and extent of child sexual abuse as a pervasive social problem has evolved from the work on the physical abuse of children, begun in the early 1960s by such noted American pediatricians as Dr. Henry Kempe and Dr. Ray Helfer. In the intervening years a movement to respect the rights of children has increased professional awareness of child sexual abuse, and alerted the public to the seriousness of the issue.

Although it happened very slowly, attitudes about children's worth, status and rights have changed considerable throughout history. It might be argued that in general, attitudes toward children have become more humane; practices such as institutional corporal punishment and child labor have been eliminated or reduced in many cultures. Perhaps because energies have been so often taken up in other basic issues concerning the welfare of children, most societies fail to recognize the pervasiveness of more hidden problems of child pornography and child prostitution.

It is significant that the problems society has tackled most successfully are those tied closely to economic structures. Those that remain, while sometimes having economic implications – particularly in the sale of pornography, primarily involve the pleasure and gratification of men. Yet, no less than attitudes toward child labor, they reflect a primitive perspective of humanity and the value and place of men, women and children within our social structures.

During the last several decades Canadians have become more sensitive to the rights and needs of children. Education is now available to all children, and recreation and entertainment are plentiful. Yet, many families and children are not supported by adequate services in other areas, especially children in trouble, and experts question the willingness of the public to reallocate more resources to the problem of child sexual abuse.

In Newfoundland the status of the child may be traced to the slow evolution of the statutes intended to provide them with services and protection. Legislative reforms that were moving forward in Canada in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were not adopted in Newfoundland until 1931 with the passing of the *Health and Public Welfare Act*. Before this time the entire responsibility for children fell to the family or charitable institutions, such as Churches. The adoption of children was not formally regulated until 1940, and the universal provision of education was not formalized until 1942 with the *School Attendance Act*. The first *Welfare of Children Act* was passed in 1944, but the child's independent rights to safety, protection and well being were not specifically legislated until the *Child Welfare Act* of 1972, in which it was finally acknowledged that these rights needed to be formally safeguarded by society.

In addition to the lack of children's legal rights, attitudes toward children in Newfoundland have tended to reflect those held in traditionally conservative societies. As a woman in her 30s stated at the public meeting in Ferryland, "Children of my generation were brought up to be seen and not heard." Another woman stated, "I believe we haven't reared out children properly in this province. Over the years children had no say. They had no opinions. Their opinions were neither accepted nor encouraged."

In the last 20 years with the impact of television and other technology, Newfoundlanders have been exposed to the competing notions of a sentimentalized view of childhood, the children's rights movement and adolescent as an accepted period of quasi-independence. All of these factors have provided new ideas about child-rearing practices, but in doing so, they have often added further pressures to the more traditional family models. In this province today, the patriarchal value system is only slowly and reluctantly giving way, as the long record of child sexual abuse under investigation by this Enquiry attests.

Current research supports the contention that "child sexual abuse is a social phenomenon linked to general attitudes and practices towards children, and also to the ways sexual relationships are organized and regulated in any particular society" (Glaser and Frosh, 1988, p.19). These attitudes and behaviors arise out of the process of socialization, the way individuals learn about group standards, acceptable behaviors and norms. The persistence of these attitudes led the commission to examine the family – the basic social unit – as well as other institutions and agents that directly contribute to the socialization of children, and that may contribute to both incidence and denial of child sexual abuse.

- ♦ **The Family.** Because families are the primary socializing agents in our culture, the child-rearing practices that prevail at any given time generally both reflect and inform the attitudes and values of the wider society. Although the definition of the family unit has undergone continual revision throughout recorded history, today there is the recognition that a dramatically accelerated rate of social change has been occurring throughout Western civilization during the last half century. Such change has destabilized the family and has required alteration of the traditional family model.

Since World War II, rising standards of living, combined with a range of income security programs have displaced the family as the bastion of defense against most needs, and have even reduced the financial motivation for maintaining the family as an economic unit. There has also been an attendant shift in what is valued by individuals within society in general and in the family in particular. Because most people do not have to worry about simple survival any more, self-preservation of offspring is less a primary concern. This has allowed more time and energy to be spent on developing personal dimensions and satisfying more individual needs. While this is not always bad, it may be producing in society an increasingly narcissistic and hedonistic individualism, i.e., an individualism that is primarily concerned with the wants and satisfaction of self and is less concerned with and responsive to the needs of others. One natural result of this kind of individualism is the further weakening of marriage ties and other family relationships.

In any case, statistics show that more children are now being raised in one-parent families, the majority of which are headed by young women. These families are increasing in number because more women are choosing to be single parents, and because of the rising rate of marriage breakdown. Many marriages are ending during the first five years, and as a result, the children of these families lack the presence of two parents to share the role of parenting. The impact of this on future generations of adults is not yet known.

During and after the *Sexual Revolution* of the 1960s, there was less commitment to the notion of sexual fidelity within marriage. More recently, the increasing threat of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, is beginning to restrict sexual practices once more, but it is doing so without strengthening the moral and emotional commitment within relationships. People may be less sexually active with different partners from fear rather than from a sense of fidelity.

Today, children are fewer in number, and more first-born children are being born to older parents. These parents, who are beginning child-rearing in their late 30s and early 40s often combine the task with demanding professional careers that must necessarily diminish the time available for participating in the family.

Changing economic factors in Newfoundland society have forced families to relocate, often repeatedly. This is different from the father's leaving home to work for extended periods, a more traditional practice that has not been without its own stress for parents and children alike. However, unlike the absence of the father, family relocation removes the support of an extended kinship system, where grandparents, aunts and uncles are nearby, and may lead to increasing social isolation of the nuclear family in each subsequent place of residence.

In recent years more marriages are breaking down when a couple reach their 40s, and this, too, will significantly affect the value formation of both young and adolescent children. At an age that earlier generations considered to be stable and settled, large numbers of men and women are undergoing painful change and growth. More people have been experiencing mid-life crises, probably the result of many different factors coming together at this phase of their lives. If they had children when they were younger, their child-rearing tasks are now largely completed, and shifts within the labor force may disrupt their careers or undermine the perceived value of their work.

The Roman Catholic Church has always had an interest in family life, but its influence in this area may be waning as more people find it difficult to accept the Church's stand on the permanence of the bond of marriage. Among increasing numbers of divorced Roman Catholics who wish to marry, there is a strong indication that the Church's influence has almost disappeared in this important social dimension.

- ◆ **The Church.** The contribution to socialization by organized religion parallels or, for some people, supercedes that provided by families. While many individuals have positive experiences because they belong to a religious community, there are values and attitudes transmitted by the organization and teachings of churches that may actually create, influence and perpetuate abusive relationships.

For instance, the Assembly of Quebec Bishops, in its recent document entitled *Violence*, acknowledges the contribution of violence to male dominance within society and the Church. Unquestioning obedience to authority figures, viewing suffering as desirous and unavoidable, and emphasis on inherent sinfulness can have negative effects on those who are victimized by sexual abuse, because they reinforce both guilt and responsibility. Also within the Church, the emphasis on unlimited and often unconditional forgiveness and the requirement to keep the family intact, no matter what the cost, may perpetuate the abuse, because it discourages the victim from escaping from the abuser.

Religious systems have also imparted negative attitudes about sexuality issues, and have suppressed discussion of sex and sexuality, a situation that makes disclosure of sexual abuse all the more difficult. Patton (1988, p.129) describes the atmosphere surrounding sex in Roman Catholicism:

*Traditional Catholic education, obsessed with how sinful Catholics were as human beings, taught the ordinary Catholic to distrust his or her sexual feelings and all erotic behavior. Catholicism tended to keep people passive and receptive. It did little to help them think for themselves. Catholics became conditioned because of the massive use of fear. It was in this context that sex became such a corrosive element in Catholic life. It was also in the atmosphere that so much obsessive-compulsive behavior developed in the name of religion and sex. Catholics were not encouraged to love themselves when all their energy was enjoined so rigorously to chain the evil beast of sex within themselves. That this methodology was unhealthy is now unquestionable, but that it was used extensively is undeniable. The consequences for people who were given a distorted sense of themselves and their humanity over sex and religion are difficult if not impossible to measure.*

- ♦ **The School.** Schools continue the traditional socialization process often begun in the family and church. The separate denominational education system that has been the norm in Newfoundland for more than a century may further influence the attitudes and socialization of the children.

One of the significant socialization effects with which this Report is concerned is sexual stereotyping and the reinforcement of traditional male-dominant roles. Several studies show contradictions in some teachers' interactions with children, such as expressing favor for the feminine mode of conduct – obedience, quietness, neatness and reading – while at the same time maintaining an overriding preference for teaching boys. The rationale given for this preference is that males are more active, open and honest, males are easier to talk to, and that males are more outspoken and willing to exchange ideas.

The problem of stereotyping in the school system is present in the classroom, but also extends to textbooks. According to the Ontario Teachers' Federation (1987, p.10), several studies of English and French textbooks in Canada all found stereotyping: "The subtle, almost subliminal, message of these texts was that women are secondary and perhaps less effective participants in life's important events, while men must always be competent, knowledgeable and strong." Nevertheless, awareness of stereotyping and male bias in curriculum materials is growing as educational systems have begun to examine the values and attitudes they bring to their work, and consequently to their pupils.

- ♦ **The Media.** Television, music, music videos and advertising are powerful and sometimes insidious contributors to social learning. On television and in motion pictures, males are often portrayed in dominant roles, while women are frequently depicted as victims of violence. Many music videos are especially culpable in this regard. Their emotional messages are directed to a juvenile audience who are highly susceptible to their violent imagery.

Advertising is a powerful means of communication that can influence values and standards as well as shopping preferences. The sexualization of children in fashion promotion is an example of the sexually exploitive role that advertising can assume. Images of children dressed as adults, assuming sexual poses and having apparently seductive facial expressions, are becoming more prevalent. This trend to make children sexual objects may have serious effects on the incidence of child sexual abuse, since it appears to legitimize objectification. As well, children are encouraged to become prematurely sophisticated, a pretext often used by abusers.

- ♦ **Current Child-Rearing Practices.** Although most writers and professionals will stand by the premise that families can be the most satisfying environment for children, they do question the

assumption that it is always a safe haven, that families always know best when it comes to children, and that families can do everything for the child on their own. They suggest that families need to examine their roles in the socialization of children by scrutinizing values and attitudes that are transmitted even within socially acceptable approaches to child rearing.

For instance, in society these acceptable approaches often incorporate the reliance on corporal punishment. According to Glaser and Frosh (1988, p.23), "Over 84% of American parents use physical punishment as a means of disciplining their children; in Britain, corporal punishment is regarded by many as acceptable within the home and legitimate at school." Although our society does not usually judge slapping or spanking as child abuse, such punishments are nevertheless forms of violent behavior that convey several messages to the child. Besides indicating parental disapproval of the child's behavior, the child may learn the more subtle messages that validate violence within the family. These messages may well resurface in the perpetration of abuse acts when the child becomes an adult.

The division of our society into male and female roles and institutions amounts to sexual stereotyping that, as we have seen, may be perpetuated by all those who are involved in raising children – the family, the Church and the school. This restriction is detrimental to both sexes. Boys who are not allowed to display their feelings and emotions may turn away from intimacy. Girls, on the other hand, are supposed to be emotional, understanding and forgiving. They learn to desire romantic, sentimental love relationships, but also to expect a sexually aggressive male who is in control of the social and sexual interaction. Glaser and Frosh (p.24) describe the link between traditional masculine socialization and sexual abuse:

*Traditional; masculinity focuses on dominance and independence, an orientation to the world that is active and assertive, which values competitiveness and turns from intimacy, achieving esteem in the glorification of force. The fear at the heart of this image is of emotion – that which makes people vulnerable and womanly; emotion is dangerous not only because it implies dependence, but also because it is alien, a representation of all that masculinity rejects. This fear of emotion in turn makes sex both over-invested in and under-invested in by men. Sex is one of the few socially acceptable ways in which men can aspire to closeness with others, and as such, it becomes the carrier of all the unexpressed desires that men's emotional illiteracy produces. However, this same power of sex to produce emotion makes it dangerous to men whose identity is built upon the rejection of emotion; sex then becomes split off, limited to the activity of the penis, an act rather than an encounter. It is also a means of taking up a particular place in the world of men: sexual conquest as a symbol of male prowess. The link between such a form of masculinity and sexual abuse is apparent: it is not just present, but inherent in the mode of personality organization that rejects intimacy. Sex is triumphant and achievement slides naturally into sex as rejection and denigration of the other.*

David Finkelhor (1984) outlines several differences between men and women that he thinks explain why men are much more likely to abuse children sexually. He believes that the differences result from distinct masculine and feminine socialization patterns, and they reflect differences learned while young children in the family setting.

According to Finkelhor, women learn earlier and much more completely to distinguish between sexual and nonsexual forms of affection. Women are sensitized to appreciate affection without a sexual component, while men, from the time they are young, are not given many opportunities to practice nurturing and express affection. Men, however, grow up seeing heterosexual success as much more important to their identity as men, and sex is often used as a way of reconfirming their adequacy on other issues. Men are socialized so that they focus their sexual interest on sexual acts isolated from the context of a relationship, while women are taught to focus on whole relationships. The ability of men to relate more concretely to sexual acts is illustrated in their greater interest in pornography, as well as their ability to be aroused by children. Men are



socialized to see as their appropriate sexual partners persons who are younger and smaller than themselves, while women are socialized to see their appropriate sexual partners as older and larger. Finkelhor thus considers it less of a contortion for a man to find a child sexually attractive, because children are merely an extension of the gradient on which men are already focused.

Not all of these attitudes are developed in the context of the family, but certainly the separation between male and female socialization begins there and is confirmed as the child's work broadens to include peers, church, school and television.

Our culture places a positive value on obedience, and, as we have seen, even condones the use of physical punishment to enforce it. Children are taught to respect adults and their authority simply because they are adults who supposedly know what is best. Such emphasis on obedience and deference to authority because of position has obvious implications for child sexual abuse. Children, who are unable to question the behavior of an adult, because they feel have no right to do so, are vulnerable to that adult, and to adults in general.

Certainly, there are many other factors to consider, but intimidation by authority and the inequality it breeds are frequently mentioned by both victims and therapists.

- ♦ **Sexuality.** Sexuality is central to who people are. Every human being is a sexual person, whether young, old, single, celibate, divorced, widowed or disabled. As James Reed (1985, pp. 44-45) writes:

*Sexuality, while not the whole of our personhood, is very basic and permeates and affects our feelings, thoughts and actions. Sexuality is our self-understanding and our way of being in the world as male and female. It includes attitudes about our bodies and those of others. Sexuality reminds us of our uniqueness. We look and feel differently from any other person. Sexuality also is a sign and a symbol of our call to communication and communion with others, to reach out and embrace others physically and spiritually.*

While sexuality is a positive and necessary part of both self and society, sometimes the expression of that sexuality has become distorted and destructive. People may confuse intimacy and sex, equate sexual activity with sexual violence, establish unequal relationships, and then abuse the resulting power imbalance through emotional and physical violence. The sexual abuse in the Archdiocese is one extreme example of this kind of distortion and confusion.

Children begin to learn about sexuality in the family setting. However, recent studies suggest that family communication about sexuality is most often characterized by the exercise of authority and arbitrary rule making, and not by mutual discussion, exploration and understandings of values (Butler, 1978, p.134). Negative attitudes about sexuality within the family can create a climate of repression and denial of sexual feelings, so that even a child's innocent question about body function or casual exploration of his or her genitals can lead to overreaction by other family members.

Today, in more liberal societies, young people still obtain most of their information about sex and sexuality from magazines, movies and their friends, rather than from their parents. Many young people find it difficult to ask intimate and troubling questions, because they sense, and are put off by, the discomfort felt by their parents. The difficulty that parents and children share stems from a number of sources. One is that parents might not feel they know enough and do not wish to display their own uncertainties and confusion. Another is mutual denial of, and discomfort with, each other's sexuality: young people find it difficult to see their parents as sexual beings like themselves, while parents find it difficult to see adolescents as anything but sexual.

Adults may also fall into the trap of thinking that there are only two postures that can be taken with regard to sexuality – the permissive or the repressive. Most parents take what they think is

the safer approach – repression. Even if they simply say nothing, they are still providing negative messages. According to Butler, “Many of us fall into uneasy silence when it comes to discussing sexual matters with our children. And with our silence, we guarantee that another generation will share awkwardness and failure to achieve a deep and caring intimacy with loved ones” (1987, p.37).

## THE VICTIM

This section examines the general characteristics of victims and victimization. It is important to emphasize that a full understanding of the dynamics of victimization must include knowledge about the offender, the relationship he has with the child, and the approaches he uses. A description of those elements follows this section on the victim.

- ◆ **Vulnerability.** Since child sexual abuse does not usually involve physical violence or physical force, it is sometimes difficult to understand the vulnerability of the victim and his powerlessness to repel a skilled seducer. Goldstein (1987) presents five characteristics that make children ideal victims from the *offender's* perspective:
  - **Natural curiosity.** Children are naturally curious about sex. Because sex is so often treated as a taboo subject, little open discussion takes place and little accurate information is presented throughout childhood and adolescence. As in Goldstein's study, the Commission's research indicates that most Newfoundland male adolescents receive their information about sexual matters from their peers. Thus, natural curiosity and lack of information can be exploited by a sex offender to lower a victim's inhibitions and gradually seduce him into sexual activity.
  - **Easily led by adults.** Children are taught to respect and obey adults. They learn early in life that survival depends on these powerful figures, whose role is to meet their physical and emotional needs, and to control them. Children are taught to believe that adults know what is best for them, and would not ask them to do something that is wrong or harmful. Some children have also been instilled with fear of adults, especially those in extra powerful positions: clergy, police officers and teachers. Apart from this, any sex offender may use his size to control a child's behavior.
  - **Need for attention and affection.** This characteristic is a very significant one in making children and adolescents ideal victims. Even when they receive attention and affection at home, children still crave it from other significant people in their lives. Although all children are at risk from seduction techniques, it seems that the child who feels his emotional needs have not been satisfied, or who has strong feelings of alienation from his family, is most vulnerable to abuse outside of the family.
  - **Need to defy parents.** Some sex offenders may exploit children, especially adolescents, by taking advantage of a period when they are seeking independence from their parents. This succeeds particularly well in silencing victims. Any child who is victimized as a result of disobeying some parental guideline or instruction is going to be very reluctant to tell anyone about it. This is especially true of adolescent boys, who might feel they will lose some of their freedom if they reveal their victimizers.
  - **View of children as fantasizers and liars.** Although the criminal justice system has been changing in a way it views testimony from children, the belief that children frequently lie or cannot distinguish reality from fantasy still persists. From the offender's point of view, this certainly contributes to the child's being an ideal victim.

The size and innocence of young children help people to understand and accept their vulnerability. However, the vulnerability of adolescents is less obvious and is often questioned. People expect teens, particularly males, will be old enough and mature enough to protect themselves. Such an expectation, though, overlooks the element of power that is such a fundamental part of most abusive relationships, and ignores the insecurities and difficulties that are an inherent part of the adolescent stage of development. As Ruth S. Kempe and C. Henry Kempe state in their book *The Common Secret, Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents* (1984), “Although the adolescent victim of sexual abuse is developmentally more mature and

therefore better able to cope with sexual abuse, the adolescent is also in the process of forming his/her sexual identity, and is therefore very vulnerable in this aspect of development.”

Clinicians concur with this view and believe that the victim’s self-esteem is also a factor that contributes to adolescent vulnerability. Adolescence is a time when children are developing their personal identity and struggling with dependencies on, and independencies from, the family. Hence, they seek assurances from others in many aspects of their lives. Offenders targeting this age group will use tactics that will boost the adolescent’s self-esteem and make them feel honored and privileged. As one victim of James Hickey said:

*He treated us so good and he was so nice to everybody. Like everybody in the community thought he was a really nice fellow, and we use to keep going back there, and it was just like such a nice place. Like if your were drunk or anything, you could go up there and he wouldn’t say nothing, instead of going home and getting bawled out by your parents. He used to treat us at our level and like kind of an understanding man. He used to leave money around for us. (Court Transcript)*

Because adolescents are frequently in trouble with someone – teachers, parents, peers – they may be particularly vulnerable. They also experience these and other changes at a time in their lives when they are moving from elementary to junior high school, leaving old friends and establishing new friends. For all these reasons, they may be seeking new forms of social approval.

For many teens, the excitement of sexual experimentation entices them, even if they have fears and questions about sexual activity itself. Offenders will also take advantage of this, the adolescents’ confused sexual feelings and the adolescents’ shaky sense of what they are and are not supposed to do. A local victim stated:

*It was almost like an evolution. As you became comfortable with one thing, you were led to be comfortable with something else – touching up and fondling us, mutual masturbation and oral sex, and that kind of thing. Later on there was kissing. Later, he began to, I guess, using his hands, put his fingers in my rectum. (Court Transcript)*

Although children who feel good about themselves and have basic trust in their instincts and abilities may be less vulnerable to the lures of a sex offender, in certain situations and with certain people, even these children may be vulnerable. In short, any child may become a victim of sexual abuse.

- ◆ **The Relationship between Offender and Victim.** The relationship of the offender to the victim will also influence the vulnerability of the victim. If the offender is an important authority figure, such as a priest, the relationship is complicated by issues of authority, trust, loyalty, dependency, caring and love. Another victim stated, “I really didn’t consent. I felt that I had no other choice but consent. I was afraid to say no. I didn’t know what would happen if I said no. So, I guess more than anything, I was afraid, scared, frightened.” (Court Transcript)

Many of the victims who testified locally also gave strong indications of positive feelings toward their abusers within the context of highly dependent relationships. And at least one of the local offenders had been previously held in the highest esteem by a wide sector of the general population.

- ◆ **Male Victimization.** It is important to comment on the issue of victimization, particularly as it relates to male victims. As we have seen, while child sexual abuse of both males and females has been under-reported, the sexual victimization of males has been especially ignored. This situation is especially evident in the Archdiocese (St. Johns, Newfoundland). Some current charges against the convicted priests relate to incidents that occurred about 20 years ago. Many

authors believe this reluctance of males to disclose is a result of the socialization of males that expects them to be strong and forceful, and that presents the notion that *boys will be boys*, and always *fool around* sexually. Another inhibition to disclosure that males have expressed is the fear of being labeled a homosexual, a result of the general and obvious homophobia in our society.

Finally, male victims themselves often have difficulty identifying that the abuse was coercive, as the following quotes indicate:

- *I feel that I was led into something in a very subtle, very, you know, very unsuspectingly brought into something that I knew absolutely nothing about really, and it gradually evolved and developed, and it was almost like you were being taught, and then almost like you graduate, and then when he was finished, you were just dropped, and that was it.*
- *One day last year, it was an insignificant event. I started to think back on how all these are coming on top of me – the feelings, the being used – and for the first time ever, and I don't know why, it just popped into my head that it's almost as if I'm being abused, and I never thought that before.*
- ♦ **Blaming the Victim.** Although children are not responsible for their own victimization, child sexual abuse offers many opportunities for *victim blaming*. Even people who are not offenders have sometimes said, "He must have known what he was doing or he would have told someone." Following the convictions of two priests in this Archdiocese, for example, a number of articles appeared in the local and national press attributing blame to victims. In another instance relating directly to the Commission, the office of the Archbishop issued a press release following the televised disclosure of a victim that discredited the victim's allegation even as it offered him support. Such actions constituted revictimization and revealed the lack of public awareness about the imbalance of power, betrayal of trust and inability to give informed consent that are critical elements in child sexual abuse. It is also important to address the issues that contribute to the belief that the victims are responsible for their own fate, since this belief can help to perpetuate abuse in the future.

The offender capitalizes on these kinds of social misconceptions, and often attempts to transfer the responsibility for initiating sexual behavior to the victim. Through denial, rationalization and manipulation, the offender succeeds in convincing the victim that he himself is responsible, as can be seen in the following victim's account:

*I phoned him one night and simply said, "It's over! It's finished! I don't want to be your friend any more. You're not really my friend." About half an hour later the doorbell rang, and Mom called upstairs, and she said that he was here and wanted to see me. It was dark. I went out and got in his car, and we drove. He parked and began to talk to me and said: "You're not some dumb kid that was taken advantage of. You knew what you were getting into all along. If I get into trouble with the police, then you're going to be in just as much trouble; and if I go to jail, they'll put you in a place for boys that's not very nice." And that was the end of that. We went back to the normal routine. (Court Transcript)*

Further, the guilt, shame and self-blame experienced by the victim often prevent the disclosure. As another local victim said, "I never consented, but I never said anything, because I was ashamed of it."

Another reason for blaming the victim might be that the consequences of believing the child are too great for people to face: a family member could go to jail, or faith in a revered leader could be shattered. The easier response is to blame the victim for his own victimization.

## THE OFFENDER

There are numerous theories about the nature of the perpetrator of child sexual abuse, but it is known that the great majority of sex offenders are male, as are those under investigation in the Archdiocese. (All references to sex offenders will therefore use the male pronoun.) Discovering and understanding more than this – who he is, why he offends, and where his life should and will proceed – is a complicated and challenging task. However, it is important that the challenge to be accepted so that society can recognize why the offender does what he does, and thus prevent the abuse, assess treatment plans, and determine the risk of the offender's repeating the offense after treatment.

- ♦ **Classification of Sex Offenders.** Sex offenders who abuse children are classified as heterosexual when they abuse girls, homosexual when they abuse boys, and bisexual when they abuse both. This does not mean that they have the same orientation towards adults. Little is known about homosexual sex offenders who abuse post-pubescent children.

A number of researchers have attempted to develop broad classification systems for sex offenders, and some distinguishing characteristics have also been outlined in the literature. Classification systems may help distinguish among types of sex offenders, but a clear understanding of these distinctions is complicated by the different terms used by researchers.

Summaries of two classification systems, developed by studying large group of offenders who have been identified by the justice system, are presented below. However, these broad systems are not sensitive enough to characterize precisely the small group of priests charged within the Archdiocese.

- **Regressed and fixated offenders.** According to Groth (1978, pp. 6-10), a distinction can be made between regressed and fixated sex offenders. The *regressed offender* prefers peer or adult partners, but because of precipitating stress, turns to children for sexual gratification. The abuse is often more impulsive than premeditated. These offenders are generally more amenable to therapeutic intervention than the fixated offender.

A *fixated offender* will have been, from adolescence, primarily attracted to children. The attraction persists regardless of other sexual experiences, i.e., it is the preferred sexual lifestyle. Rather than a reaction to an active crisis situation, the offender displays a pattern of repeated sexual contacts that may be with younger children or adolescents.

Fixed sex offenders can be further sub-divided into four types:

- *Pseudo-Affective.* The offender uses seduction or persuasion to approach the child. The offender will pick a child who is vulnerable in some way and court him over a period of time. He leads the child to believe that he is important to the offender. The child will usually be abandoned when he no longer conforms to the image that the offender expects of him.
  - *Dominating.* This type of offender does not want to pursue his contacts with the child beyond sexual encounters. His approach may vary from paying the child to abduction and physical coercion.
  - *Sadistic.* This type of offender has strong preferences for children. In order for the offender to be aroused, he needs to inflict pain on the child. In extreme cases this may lead to murder.
  - *Aggressive.* For this type of offender, the aggressive components of the act are more important than the sexual. The difference between the sadistic and the aggressive is that the former tends to feel excitement while committing the abuse, while the latter's overriding emotion is anger.
- **Situational and Preferential Child Molesters.** Goldstein (1987) refers to those who sexually abuse children as child molesters. He divides them into two broad categories: *situational* and *preferential*, and distinguishes further sub-groups within these divisions. The *situational child molester* does not have a true sexual preference for children, but engages in

sex with children for other varied and sometimes complex reasons. Abuse may range from a once in a lifetime act to a long-term pattern of behavior. Goldstein believes that most offenders are situational and that their numbers are increasing faster than those of *preferential child molesters*. With this category, Goldstein identifies four major patterns of behavior:

- *Regressed*. This kind of behavior is exhibited by what appears to be a reasonably normal individual who turns to children as a sexual substitute for preferred, peer sex partners. The main concern for victim selection seems to be availability, and many of these offenders molest their own children.
- *Morally indiscriminate*. Sexual abuse of children is simply part of a general pattern of abuse; children are molested because of their vulnerability and availability. This type of sex offender uses force, lures and manipulation; his victims can be strangers, acquaintances or his own children.
- *Sexually indiscriminate*. This individual appears to be discriminating in his behavior, except when it comes to sex. He likes to experiment sexually, and is motivated toward sex with children out of boredom. He may abuse his own children, or share them with others.
- *Inadequate*. This category includes misfits, those suffering from psychiatric or personality disorders, mental retardation or senility. The individual becomes sexually involved with children out of insecurity or curiosity. He finds children to be non-threatening objects, and might choose a vulnerable adult for the same reason. If frustrated, he can sometimes become unpredictable, and has a potential for violence.

*Preferential child molesters* have a definite sexual preference for children. Their sexual fantasies and erotic imagery focus on children. Although this type of child molester may be fewer in number than situational child molesters, both types have the potential to molest large numbers of victims. The preferential offender may exhibit specific patterns of behavior as well, which associate him with one of three major subdivisions:

- *Seductive*. The offender engages children in sexual activity by seducing them in much the same way as adults seduce each other – with attention, affection and gifts. His goal is to lower the child's sexual inhibitions over a period of time; frequently, victims reach a point where they will trade sex for attention, affection and other benefits they receive from the offender.
- *Introverted*. The offender has a preference for children, but lacks the interpersonal skills necessary to seduce them. He usually molests strangers or very young children, and engages in a minimal amount of verbal communication with his victims. This introverted sex offender is most like the stereotypical child molester – more likely to hang around places where children gather, such as playgrounds, and watch them or engage them in brief sexual encounters.
- *Sadistic*. This type of sexual offender has a sexual preference for children, but in order to be aroused or gratified, must inflict pain or suffering on the child victim; he uses lures or force to gain access to his victims, and is more likely than other molesters to abduct and even murder them.

A comparison of the two classification systems summarized above suggests similarities between Goth's fixated pseudo-affective offender and Goldstein's regressed situational child molester. In reality, sex offenders rarely fit neatly into any one classification system described in the literature. The sex offenders under investigation by this Commission exhibit characteristics of both Goth's and Goldstein's descriptions, of both pseudo-affective and of regressed homosexuals. In the absence of detailed psychosocial assessments, the Commission has thus referred to them as pseudo-affective regressed homosexuals. Psychiatric evaluations and individual therapy would refine this designation further.

- ♦ **Common Characteristics.** Although sex offenders are a very heterogeneous group, researchers and clinicians, working with sex offenders, have determined some commonalities within some general characteristics, personality traits, coping skills and defense mechanisms.

However, because this is based on information given by identified victims and offenders, reliable predictions cannot be based on it.

- **Sex.** Most of the research has dealt with male sex offenders, because women make up a very small percentage of identified sex offenders. Statistics have ranged from 1.1% (*National corrections Survey*) to 2.8% (*National Population Survey*). Badgley (1984, p.215) reported that in his study 99.2% of the sexual offenses against female victims were committed by males, and although the proportion of female assailants was higher when boys were victims, most boys and male youths were assaulted by other males. In most cases convicted female offenders were involved with male accomplices, usually a husband, common-law partner or boyfriend. However, clinicians are beginning to identify more offenders among adult female patients.
- **Age.** Most offenders are between the ages of 20 and 40, although they can be younger or older. Groth (1984, p.4) found that all convicted offenders had committed their first known offense before the age of 40, more than 80% were first offenders by the age of 30, and almost 5% had committed their first sexual assault before they reached adolescence.
- **Family background.** The information pertaining to the family background of sex offenders is far from conclusive. Most of the results of studies and clinical work have shown that sex offenders come from broken or disrupted families. However, Badgley found that most offenders surveyed had both natural parents present during their childhood.

The childhood backgrounds of offenders tend to involve *double bind parenting*, where conflicting or opposing messages are given to a child regarding the appropriateness of certain behaviors and acceptance of certain emotions. Offenders tend to come from homes where an authoritarian style of parenting, where emotions were closely monitored and suppressed, and where verbal and non-verbal controls were frequent.

- **Personality.** Offenders are often very self-centered in relation to others. They may be so insecure and immature emotionally that they do not see past their own needs. They will usually have a poorly developed moral sense and poor impulse control, and they have great fear of rejection; when they experience rejection, they often react strongly, sometimes violently.
- **Attitudes.** The majority of sex offenders initially deny their behavior. There is usually a denial of guilt and a denial of responsibility. They often reveal a number of inappropriate attitudes or distorted perceptions of the world of other people. Sex offenders may believe that children who do not forcibly resist them really want to have sex, and that they enjoy it. Some also say that they are not really harming the child if no physical force has been used, and see it as a positive, healthy learning experience for the child.
- **Sexual preference.** Marshall and Barbaree, in their studies of men who had molested boys, looked at their sexual orientation to adults. Only one-third of the men were classified as homosexuals, and most of these men were married, but reported their sexual relations with their wives unsatisfactory. These men chose their sexual orientation from family and friends and targeted boys who were older – an average of 12.4 years – than those targeted by heterosexuals – an average of 7.3 years. There is no evidence in the literature that male adult homosexuals are more likely to prefer children to adult partners.
- **Sexual knowledge.** Many individuals' knowledge of sexuality is limited because of a lack of open discussion in our society; but sex offenders, in particular, have a very confined and inadequate knowledge of sexuality, though they are afraid to acknowledge their ignorance. They tend to be prudish and only feel comfortable in limited activities.
- **Sexual needs.** Offenders have difficulties with intimacy, and generally do not know how to relate with affection to adults. They are often ignorant of the fact that sex serves more needs than physical gratification. Hence, they often feel unsatisfied by sex because they have a limited knowledge of what sex is supposed to do.
- **Sexual dysfunctions.** Few sex offenders suffer from actual sexual dysfunction. Some show signs of impotency with adults, but not with children.

## WHY MEN SEXUALLY ABUSE CHILDREN

In the short time that they have been given serious study, theories on child sexual abuse have undergone many changes. Generally, though, theories have progressed from strictly medical or psychiatric models to include social and cultural factors.

### ♦ **Common Categories of Theories.**

- *Physio-chemical theories* suggest that biological factors may be a source of instability contributing to sexually abusive behavior. Although they may have some merit, they are underdeveloped and controversial. Such an explanation can sometimes be taken as justification for abusive behavior, making attempts at prevention medically, ethically and legally complicated, if not impossible.
- *Behavioral theories* have developed and changed over the years, and now rely heavily on cognitive theory. The main focus on these theories is that sexual attractions underlie the behavior, and these sexual attractions are learned via classical conditioning processes. However, experiments done in laboratory settings have not confirmed the association between deviant fantasies and deviant acts.
- *Psychoanalytic perspectives* have generally focused on unresolved childhood trauma that may have produced such manifestations as hatred towards women, strong feelings of anger, and fixated psychosexual development. More recently, psychoanalytic theory has been used to explain how the process of male socialization, which emphasize the development of masculine qualities, such as assertion and aggression over intimacy, may contribute to sexually abusive behavior.
- *Situational theories* view child sexual abuse mainly as an un planned, circumstantial occurrence. They examine aspects of the victim's behavior that may have contributed to the abuse, and consider the circumstances of the offender at the time, such as the influence of alcohol or drugs. The danger of such theories is that they may contribute to blaming the victim and minimizing sexual abuse as a serious and pervasive social problem.
- *Feminist analyses* have looked at the problem in broad socio-cultural terms. Sexual abuse is seen as a function of the inferior status of women and children, and of predatory attitudes toward them by pornography and other media. Patriarchal social structure and patterns of male socialization are seen as the chief causes of child sexual abuse.

- ♦ **Comprehensive Approaches.** An approach developed by Marshall and Barbaree (1984) attempts to integrate biological endowment, childhood experiences and the influence of the socio-cultural environment with both situational factors and the specific circumstances of the event. This theory unifies the wide range of factors that have been shown to contribute to some extent to the development of sexually abusive behavior.

Finkelhor, too, offers a model that combines several individual theories and social/cultural factors that contribute to child sexual abuse. He believes that these four pre-conditions must be met for the abuse to occur:

- **Motivation.** The sex offender must have some motivation to abuse a child sexually. There are three components to this sexual motivation:
  - *Emotional congruence.* The offender may not see himself as different from the child. His immaturity and low self-esteem make it difficult for him to relate to adults, and he may feel that he can get children to do what an adult wouldn't.
  - *Sexual arousal.* This generally refers to the psychological response of the offender. Early sexual experiences have caused him to find children arousing.
  - *Blockage.* The offender is blocked in his ability to get his sexual and emotional needs met in adult relationships.
- **Overcoming internal inhibitions.** Along with the motivation to abuse sexually, the offender must overcome his own internal inhibitions. Alcohol is frequently used as an inhibitor, and he may rely on a number of social/cultural factors to rationalize his behavior. Child



pornography, weak criminal sanctions and the traditional power of the father may support the offender's view that he is not really doing anything wrong.

- **Overcoming external inhibitions.** Once the offender is motivated and has overcome internal inhibitions, he must then eliminate certain external forces before he commits the sexual abuse. The most important of these is the supervision of the child by other people. Abuse is more likely to occur in situations where access to the child is more readily and privately available, so offenders are very good at setting up situations that allow this access.
- **Overcoming the child's resistance.** This is a very important part of the chain of events. The approaches used by the offender have already been discussed, and obviously, a key role in the enticement and entrapment of the child. The other element is the vulnerability of the child, already discussed at length previously. The offender is very good at picking and setting up his victims

Finkelhor's model has gained wide acceptance among professionals in the assessment and treatment of offenders and victims, and has provided this Commission with a useful framework for analyzing the problem of child sexual abuse in this Archdiocese. It may be concluded that elements of Finkelhor's model were present in the situations of abuse that occurred in the Archdiocese, such as the selection of victims, the use of alcohol and other elements of seduction.

## INFORMED CONSENT

The issue of *informed consent* relates directly to the issue of blaming the victim, and is particularly pertinent to the cases in the Archdiocese. Under certain circumstances, consent cannot actually – morally or legally – be given. The following excerpt is part of a report prepared, at the Commission's request, by Dr. Jocelyn Aubut, Chief of Psychiatry at Montreal's Institut Pinel. Dr. Aubut examines the issue by posing questions used to test the validity of the consent:

*The relationship between a priest guiding the spiritual life of a child or adolescent can easily be understood as a fiduciary one. This is a social relationship in which one person accepts the trust and confidence of another to act in the latter's best interest.*

*It has been demonstrated that there are many types of sexual abuse and abusers. It would be too lengthy in the context of this paper to discuss the ethical problems for each and every one of them. Moreover, almost everyone will agree that the continuous and brutal sexual abuse of a child, using unnecessary physical constraint, is unethical. The child cannot be considered to give consent to this form of abuse.*

*The discussion will focus on the fixed abuser of the pseudo-affective type, who uses persuasion with no unnecessary physical constraint, and who tries to keep the guiding role with the child. In this type of sexual abuse, the first criterion of informed consent is: does the abuser explain to the child the nature of the behavior that is expected of him? The abuser will usually state explicitly what he wants from the child. The corollary, of course, is related to the age of the child. At what age is the child able to understand the real nature of a sexual contact? The law helps us here by stating that under 14 years of age, a child cannot give consent to any form of sexual activity. Do adolescents understand the nature of sexual activity? Most of them probably do, but this has to be balanced by other factors: psychological maturity, prior sexual experience, prior abuse, parental and personal standards on sexuality, etc*

*The second standard is: does the child understand the purpose of the sexual activity that is demanded by the abuser? Sexuality may serve many purposes – physical, psychological, even sociological dimensions are associated with it. The simple hedonistic sharing of pleasure, reproduction (continuation of the species), the sharing of love, the assertion of one sex over the other are just a few examples of different meanings that have been associated with sexual activity. For most adults, the meaning of their sexual activities changes overtime. It takes a long time to integrate the different*

*dimensions of sexuality. It is not something that is acquired and fixed with the legal age of adulthood.*

*Abusers have many ways to rationalize their actions. Many think that they are doing it for the child – to show him affection, to help him understand his own sexuality, to prevent him from being abused by someone else. Fixed abusers of the pseudo-affective type are especially prone to these types of cognitive distortions. In fact, it has been demonstrated that in the dynamics of this kind of abuse, the child is used either as a minor or as a sustainer for the lower self-esteem of the abuser. In the end, the purpose of the sexual act is not mutual pleasure nor love. Mutuality is most often excluded. What is proposed is an illusion of a relationship. If the child does not answer to the scenario of the abuser, he will be dropped. The child thinks that the purpose of the act is love, or a way of making him feel special or important. In the end, he will usually learn that is the other way around. He is being used to boost the abuser's falling ego. The psychological dimensions of sexual activity were certainly not explained to him, and he definitely did not have the background to grasp the different purposes involved in the sexual contact with the abuser.*

*The third standard is: have the risks of the sexual contact been discussed with the child? In the case of fixed abusers of the pseudo-affective type, there is usually little risk of physical harm or damage. There is always the risk of transmitting a venereal disease to the child, and this certainly is not discussed with the child. But, most importantly, the risk of psychological harm is not evoked. Moreover, the abuser will have a strong tendency to exaggerate the advantages by using a variety of rationalizations – “It is love”; “It will make you less lonely”; “You will be better prepared to face adult sexuality”, etc. There are many disturbances in sexual identity: mistrust of adults, hyper or hyposexuality, decline in school performance, etc. The fixed abusers of the pseudo-affective sub-type will usually try to keep the relationship going with the child as long as possible. He will witness some of the side effects of the abuse of the child. He will seldom have a tendency to blame himself for these disturbances in the child. He will have a strong tendency to blame the environment of the child – “The mother is not adequate for the Child”; “The school is no good”; etc. The general message that comes across to the child from the abuser is that adults are generally bad for him. Instead of discussing the risks of the abuser, the abuser will blame the adults in general. The notion of secrecy is also quite relevant to the third criterion. By making the abuse a secret between him and the child, the abuser will not only avoid discussing the possible risks involved, but will also prevent the child from discussing the situation with other adults who could provide information to the child or adolescent.*

*The fourth criterion is: does the child know the benefits he will gain from engaging in the sexual contact with the abuser? On a superficial level, the abuser proposes love, affection, understanding, mutuality, making the child feel he is a good person. On a deeper level, the child is used as a mirror. He himself has to conform to the idealistic view the abuser has of him. As soon as he wants to differentiate himself from that image, he will be abandoned. Even if some child abusers have some sort of caring for the child, it is a narcissistic caring, and the fact remains that the child will come out of the experience with a strong feeling that he has been used, that he is worthless, that the relation was just an illusion.*

*The fifth criterion is quite important, and is: does the child have the choice to engage or not in the sexual contacts with the abuser? The question is easy to answer when we consider the fixed abusers of the dominant or sadistic types. This question is more delicate when we look at the abusers of the fixed pseudo-affective type. Most of these abusers will state that they have not forced a child; they did not exercise any physical coercion; the child came to them; he had been abused before, so he knew what he was going to happen, and he even wanted it and liked it. Many arguments can be used*

*against this type of rationalization. First, the situation at hand is characterized by unequal power. The priest is the bearer of the Holy Truth, and he has been mandated by God to lead his parishioners – adults and children. Priests are thus invested with authority and an aura of sanctity. By definition they cannot lie; what they suggest to their parishioners is the truth. Their level of power over the child is two-fold: they are adults and they are mandated by God; second, the priest has acquired special knowledge about the vulnerabilities of the child. Fixed abusers of the pseudo-affective type have known the child for a while before engaging in sexual activities. Finally, the argument that some children have been abused many times, and therefore could easily get out of the situation, can also be dismissed. Repeating or reliving a traumatic situation over and over is a well-known psychological phenomenon. It is seen in a variety of clinical situations. It is seen as a normal phenomenon in children who have been to the dentist and play dentist when they come back home. It is seen also as a normal phenomenon when people dream over and over again of a traumatic situation they have recently experienced, e.g., a car accident. It is seen as a less normal phenomenon in some women who have had alcoholic fathers and marry alcoholics. Putting oneself through a traumatic situation over and over again, whether a dream or in reality, is a way of trying to master the anxiety and sense of annihilation that was experienced at the time. Unfortunately, it becomes a self-defeating pattern when it is the only way a person deals with the trauma. Children who find themselves in repetitive situations of sexual abuse do not remain in it because they want it or like it. They do it usually because it is the only way they have found to deal with their abuse. But more than anything, the fact that many children get involved in repetitive situations of abuse reflects clearly society's incapacity to protect them adequately.*

*In conclusion, the consent given by a child to an abuser can never be an informed one, even in the case of the less aggressive or less physically abusive type of abuser – the fixed pseudo-affective. At least four out of five criteria, using the fiduciary model, are not met: priests establish fiduciary type relations with their parishioners, and as such, are supposed to take the best interest in the children under their care or supervision. This means that they must promote their growth and their autonomy, and accompany them to adulthood. By engaging in sexual activities with these children, priests are really in a conflict of interest. Promoting growth and autonomy implies losing the children under their supervision. At the same time, they would be losing one of, if not their major source of sexual satisfaction and pseudo-affection.*

Thus, it is simply impossible to impute blame or responsibility to victims. As Court and Crime Compensation Commission records show, the victims in the Archdiocese were systematically conditioned and subtly deceived over an extended period by criminals whose calculating patience and cunning must not be underestimated. It is important, in the Commission's view, that this matter be clearly understood, especially in the light of comments made by senior church officials and others, in this and other dioceses, about the complicity of victims. It is important for the victims. It is important for the community.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is apparent from the preceding analysis that the problem involves characteristics of both the individual offender and of our society in general, and it suggests that the abuse behavior evolves over time as well as being a particular event or action having certain more specific characteristics and consequences.

The evidence available to the Commission indicates that the pattern of sexual assault by these offenders always involved boys of at least 12 years of age at the onset of contact sexual abuse; so there is no compelling evidence of classical pedophilia, which involves a preference for pre-pubescent males. Some of these men were sexually active with a number of adolescent male partners at any given time. They also appear to be homosexual. There is no recorded history in any of these offenders' priesthood years of sexual involvement with female partners.

The Commission does not intend to imply, however, that sexual abuse of children is simple the consequence of homosexuality or homosexual behavior. In fact, there is evidence that homosexual persons are, statistically, not the group most likely to abuse children sexually. The specific abuses this commission has investigated are, therefore, a statistical anomaly, since the abuses for which convictions were handed down were committed by men who appear, on the evidence assembled, to have been engaging in homosexual behavior by preference.

Although the Commission would liked to have been able to draw further conclusions about the type of sex offender involved in local events, it is limited by the quantity and quality of the data available to it about the individuals implicated in the Archdiocese. In general terms, though, and based on a review of the literature, the evidence presented to the Commission supports the conclusion that the offenders in these cases were for the most part regressed homosexuals.

Transcribed by

*Tom Kyle*

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1/ Transcribed from *The Report of the Archdiocesan Commission of Enquiry into the Sexual Abuse of Children by Members of the Clergy*, Chapter Three, *The Cause of Child Sexual Abuse*, conducted by the Archdiocese of St. Johns, Newfoundland, 1989.