

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Untold Stories: An Interpretive Study of Older Women Sexually Abused as Children

by

Martha Lynne Farris

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

1996

Approved by Edwin S. Uehr
Chairperson of Supervisory Committee

Program Authorized
to Offer Degree Social Welfare

Date July 29, 1996

UMI Number: 9704490

**Copyright 1996 by
Farris, Martha Lynne**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 9704490
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

© Copyright 1996

Martha Lynne Farris

Doctoral Dissertation

In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctoral degree at the University of Washington, I agree that the Library shall make its copies freely available for inspection. I further agree that extensive copying of this dissertation is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with "fair use" as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Requests for copying or reproduction of this dissertation may be referred to University Microfilms, 1490 Eisenhower Place, P.O. Box 975, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, to whom the author has granted "the right to reproduce and sell (a) copies of the manuscript in microform and/or (b) printed copies of the manuscript made from microform."

Signature *Mark Harris*
Date *July 29, 1986*

University of Washington

Abstract

Untold Stories: An Interpretive Study of Older Women Sexually Abused as Children

by Martha Lynne Farris

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee: Assistant Professor Edwina Uehara
School of Social Work

Although nearly five million women over age 55 are estimated to have been sexually abused as children, little is known of their experience. This interpretive study attempts to understand the effects of child sexual abuse for older women and their ways of coping with it. Audio taped life stories were collected from 12 women, ages 57 to 75. Tapes were transcribed and narrative analysis was used to examine the effects of the abuse and women's ways of coping within the lives of three individual women. Inductive analytic coding was used to examine those issues across the total sample.

Results from this study indicate that older women experienced the same effects from the abuse as younger women, including negative feelings about the self, guilt, self-blame, sexual problems, and lost opportunities. Gender roles for these older women complicated the abuse, negatively impacting self-esteem, self-development, and feelings of justice. The experience of sexual abuse in childhood resonated across women's lives, complicating developmental tasks of aging such as widowhood, changing sexual relations, and retirement. Many of these women endured the abuse as children and the effects of it as adults. They were acquiescent in relationships and silent about their feelings and thoughts. Several resolved the effects of the abuse and the limitations of gender roles by gaining their voice, making choices and overcoming the past. All of the women exhibited remarkable resourcefulness and some degree of resiliency. Self-in-relation theory is proposed as a theoretical framework to explain women's coping strategies.

The organizational structure of the life stories and individual narrative structures reflect how three women coped with the abuse. They told stories of endurance, gaining a voice, and transcendence. Narrative analysis revealed the impact of the abuse throughout their lives. It facilitated an understanding of what the abuse meant to each woman and how she coped with it. How women told their stories was part of their story.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Older Women and Sexual Abuse: Background of the Problem and This Study	1
Statement of the Problem and Specific Aims	1
Introduction	3
Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse	4
Long Term Effects of the Abuse	7
Physiological Problems	8
Interpersonal Problems	8
Psychological Symptoms	10
Long Term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse and Older Women	11
Intervening Factors	13
Factors Associated with the Abuse	14
Family Characteristics	15
Specific Family Roles: Mother	18
Specific Family Roles: Father	19
Theoretical Frameworks and Child Sexual Abuse	20
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	21
Traumagenic Dynamics	21
Psychological Adaptation	23
Developmental Theory	25
Coping with the Abuse	27
Treatment Issues	30
Self-Blame	31
Secrecy and Disclosure	32
Control	33
Meaning-making	34
Summary	36
Location of the Researcher	38
Family background	38
Research Interest	40
Paradigm Shift	41
Feminist Perspective	42
Chapter 2: Methodology and Methods	45
Introduction	46
Implementation of the study	47
Sampling and Recruitment	47

Interviewing.....	49
Transcription	52
Life Story.....	55
Structural Components of Life Stories.....	58
Narrative Analysis.....	60
A Narrative Paradigm.....	60
Genres of Narrative	67
Explanations	69
Chronicles.....	70
Inductive analytic coding	72
Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability	73
Limitations of the Study.....	75
Summary	77
Chapter 3: A Triptych of Lives: Alice: A Story of Survival and Endurance	80
Introduction	80
Episode One	80
Episode Two	87
Episode Three	92
Episode Four	98
Summary	104
Chapter 4: A Triptych of Lives: Virginia: Finding Her Voice, A Life in Progress	114
Introduction.....	114
Childhood.....	114
Marriage	126
The Present.....	138
Summary	144
Chapter 5: A Triptych of Lives: Belinda: Reclaiming Her Life	150
Introduction.....	150
The Age of Nine.....	150
The Legacy of the Abuse.....	160
Coping with the Abuse.....	164
The Present.....	174
Summary	176
Chapter 6: Life Story Summary: The Stories and the Telling	183
Introduction	183
The Stories	183

The Abuse.....	183
The Effects of the Abuse as a Life Course Experience	184
Coping with the Abuse	187
Blame and Accountability	190
Self blame.....	191
Resiliency	193
The Telling of the Story	196
Structural Organization of the Life Story	196
Narrative construction	198
Chapter 7: The Abuse and the Consequences: Child Sexual Abuse Across the Life Course	
.....	205
Introduction	205
The Abuse	205
Verbal Comments.....	206
Sexual Contact.....	207
Causal Conditions	207
Silence	208
Power Differential Between Children and Adults.....	214
Paternal Abuse or Absence.....	216
Lack of Maternal Affirmation	217
Gender Roles	221
Effects of the Abuse	222
Struggles with Responsibility	223
Negative Feelings About the Self.....	225
Sexuality and Sexual Relations	227
Lost opportunities.....	237
Intervening Factors.....	238
Exacerbating Factors	238
Christian Education	238
Mitigating Factors	240
Parental Validation	240
Abuse and Gender	246
Summary	251
Chapter 8: Child Sexual Abuse Across the Life Course: Coping Strategies	254
Introduction	254
Endurance.....	254
Silence	254
Acquiescence.....	259

Perseverance	263
Gaining a Voice.....	266
Making Choices	269
Overcoming the Past	275
Forgiveness	281
Resiliency	284
Summary	288
Chapter 9: Discussion	291
Specific Aims	291
The Effects of the Abuse.....	291
Comparisons with Younger Women.....	294
Developmental Aspects of Child Sexual Abuse	296
Coping with the Abuse.....	297
Comparisons with Younger Women.....	300
Theoretical Perspective	302
Self-in-Relation Theory and Child Sexual Abuse.....	309
Self-in-Relation Theory and the Impact of Gender Roles.....	311
Implications for Social Work.....	315
Bibliography	319
Appendix A: Flyer for Recruiting Participants.....	330
Appendix B: Consent Form.....	331
Appendix C: Interview Questionnaire	332
Appendix D: Table of Participants and Abuse Characteristics.....	333

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Number</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. Percentages of Women Sexually Abused as Children, by Cohort.....	6

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank those in the School of Social Work who have so generously given me their time, encourage, and support. I would not have entered the doctoral program without the mentorship of John Gibson. His guidance to this topic and support of my interest was invaluable. His kindness and gentle intellect are a model to me. Ellen Olshansky has been willing to fit me into her demanding schedule without hesitation, and my program has been enriched because of her. Eddie Uehara has offered encouragement over the past four years. She opened up the world for me in a way that few teachers can. Her knowledge of interpretive methods has guided me to a new awareness of the possibilities of research. She has offered financial support as well as encouragement and stepped in as chair of my committee, after Naomi Gottlieb's death, despite the demands of family and work. I can not thank Lew Gilchrist enough for coming to my aid at the last minute. I have the utmost respect and admiration for her intelligence, kindness, and responsiveness. I would also like to thank Tony Ishisaka, who also offered his support after Naomi's death. Just knowing that he was there was reassurance at a very difficult time. Mary Gillmore and the Take5 Project were my main financial support for the first three years of this program, and I thank her very deeply. Her honesty and generosity are greatly appreciated.

I cannot begin to acknowledge the presence of my partner, John DeLapp, in my doctoral program. From the initial application, through every class, to this dissertation, he has offered every kind of support and unwavering patience. He has listened endlessly to my questions, read innumerable drafts, and provided his editing expertise. He has taught me everything that I know about mutuality in relationships, and I will thank him for a long time. My sister, Carolyn Sabin, listened to me tirelessly during this last stretch, through the miracles of electronic mail. Her willingness to share her feelings and thoughts with me let me be who I am, and I am very grateful. My mother, Onea Farris, offered the

best support and validation of this dissertation that anyone could offer, she told me her stories.

Finally, I would like to thank the women who volunteered to participate in this study. Without their participation there would be no study. I will not forget their honesty and bravery in sharing their lives in order to increase the knowledge of this topic. Their generosity guided me through the analytic process, and I hope that this study makes their contributions worthwhile.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Naomi Gottlieb and to my mother, Onea Farris, two very important old women who have affected my life and taught me many important lessons. Naomi offered to chair my program and guided me gently, wisely, and generously through the first three years, until her accidental death in Prague, 1995. William Stafford, the Pulitzer Prize winning poet who died in 1993, wrote of a colleague: "His innocence was his strength— his readiness to be the person he naturally was and to assume that others were like that too." Those words describe Naomi as well. She treated her students with such profound respect that we felt we could be the person she thought we were and do the things she thought we could do. Her knowledge of feminist social work and her commitment to women's issues will guide me for years. I can only hope to find myself growing to meet her expectations as I age. I have thought of her often as I analyzed and wrote this dissertation, and dedicate it to her memory. My mother offers me another example of intelligent aging. Her willingness to offer encouragement and support, and especially to tell me her stories of her childhood have meant a great deal to me. Her accounts of her early schooling and struggles to earn her education have always inspired me to do as much with my educational opportunities as she did with hers. I dedicate this dissertation to her too, with love.

Permission to Reprint

“A Ritual to Read to Each Other” by William Stafford (page 1) from Stories That Could Be True, copyright 1977, William Stafford (Harper & Row, 1977). Reprinted by permission of the estate of William Stafford.

Verses from “A Happy Childhood” (page 45) are reprinted with the permission of the author, William Matthews.

Chapter 1
Older Women and Sexual Abuse:
Background of the Problem and This Study

A Ritual to Read to Each Other

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.

For there is many a small betrayal in the mind,
a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break
sending with shouts the horrible errors of childhood
storming out to play through the broken dike.

And as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,
but if one wanders the circus won't find the park,
I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact.

And so I appeal to a voice, something shadowy,
a remote important region in all who talk:
though we could fool each other, we should consider—
lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark.

For it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep:
the signals we give—yes or no, or maybe—
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.

William Stafford

Statement of the Problem and Specific Aims

In the earlier part of this century child sexual abuse was a hidden problem. In the past 20 years, however, research has contributed to an increased public awareness of the extent and consequences of the problem. It is currently believed that a significant portion, from 19% to 33%, of adult women in this country have been sexually abused as children (Herman, Russell, & Trocki, 1986; Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990).

Survivors of child sexual abuse have suffered psychological, physiological, and interpersonal problems as a result of that experience. Although there is an increased awareness of the consequences of child sexual abuse in the last 20 years, such abuse is not a new phenomenon (Finkelhor, 1984). In a national survey, 19% of women born before 1918, and 29% of those born between 1927 and 1935, reported incidences of child sexual abuse (Finkelhor, et al., 1990). Using current population data and prevalence rates of 19% and 29% respectively, it can be estimated that 5,955,410 million women over the age of 60 experienced some form of child sexual abuse. Despite these numbers, there are few references to these women in the professional literature. Knowing the seriousness of the problem and the extent of repercussions for the survivors, it is imperative that social workers attempt to learn from the experience of older women who were sexually abused as children, so that the “errors of childhood” may be contained. This study then attempts to answer the following questions:

1. From the perspective of older women themselves, has the experience of child sexual abuse affected their lives, and if so how?
2. Do developmental tasks of aging interact with the effects of child sexual abuse for women?
3. Have older women developed coping strategies for the effects of the abuse; and if so, what are they? Have these strategies changed over their lifetime?

Introduction

Use of the term “child sexual abuse” is relatively recent and covers a range of behaviors. One of the more widely accepted definitions includes two criteria: forced or coerced sexual behavior that is imposed on the child, and sexual behavior between a child and a much older person or a person in a caretaking role (Finkelhor, et al., 1990). That definition includes attempted intercourse, oral sex or sodomy, genital touching, sexual kissing, pornographic picture taking, and sexual exhibitionism.

Although child sexual abuse is a recent term, references to incest occur in ancient texts (Rush, 1980). It has been defined legally as “the crime of marrying, and/or having coitus with a person or persons who are biologically closely related” (Russell, 1984). It is considered by others to include any exploitive sexual contact between family members before the victim is eighteen (Herman et al., 1986; Russell, 1986).

In the earlier part of this century child sexual abuse was a hidden problem. Although Freud initially theorized that child sexual abuse was responsible for hysteria, obsessions, and paranoia, he later altered his theory and claimed that children’s complaints about sexual abuse were fantasies (Masson, 1984). In the late 1930’s psychoanalysts still believed that children enjoyed sexual relations with adults and could be the seducer in sexual relationships (Olafson, Corwin, & Summit, 1991). Although Kinsey reported in 1953 that 25% of his respondents said they had been approached sexually, and 80% of these women were frightened by the experience, he dismissed those

fears as inappropriate (Herman, 1981). Not until the 1970's did the prevalence and consequences of child sexual abuse come to public and professional attention.

Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse

Beginning with Finkelhor's survey of New England college students in 1979, there has been an increase in research into the prevalence of child sexual abuse and the consequences and treatment concerns of survivors. Prevalence data, which refers to the number of individuals who have been victimized over the course of a childhood, are generally gathered by survey information from adolescents and adults. Those estimates vary widely, and from 5.3% to 62% of women have been estimated to have been sexually abused as children (Wynkoop, Capps, and Priest, 1995). Variance of the prevalence rates is thought to be due to several factors. Surveys, i.e., the components of interview, instrument administration, or location of the survey may all affect prevalence rates. Thus personal interviews result in higher reporting rates than phone or mail surveys. Pacific states have higher reported rates of sexual abuse than other regions of the country. Respondents' memory of the abuse is another confounding factor because surveys frequently rely on retrospective information. Finally, definitions of child and sexual abuse also vary and may affect the estimated prevalence rate. Definitions of childhood vary. Childhood has been defined as age before puberty or before the age of 18. This definition hinges on the question of consent, i.e., is there an age at which a child can consent to have sexual relations with an adult. Some studies then assume that by puberty, generally defined as age 13 or 14, children acquire the ability to consent to sexual relations. This

assumption does not take into account the power differential between children and adults, hence some have qualified the definition of abuse to include only those acts between children up to the age of 12 and someone 5 years older, or between children age 13 to 16 and someone 10 years older (Peters, Wyatt, & Finkelhor, 1986). The argument has been made that even though postpubertal children may consent to sexual relations, those relations are wrong because they frequently result in negative consequences for the child. Finkelhor (1984) argues that sexual contact between adults and children under the age of 18 is not only a risk for the child, but is ethically and morally wrong. He writes that “children are incapable of truly consenting to sex with adults because they are children.” (Finkelhor, 1984, pp. 17). Definitions of sexual abuse range from reliance on the respondents’ definition, to specific behaviors defined by the study. Some surveys have separated by question incestuous abuse from extrafamilial abuse, i.e., abuse perpetrated by a person outside the family. Samples for the surveys have consisted of adolescent or adult samples from the general public, but only one national survey has used a true random sample. That survey conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1985 used the largest sample to date which consisted of all residential telephones in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Child sexual abuse was defined any of the following behaviors: attempted intercourse, oral sex, sodomy, genital touching, sexual kissing, pornographic picture taking, sexual exhibitionism, or forced or coerced sexual behavior. Childhood was defined as age 18 or under. This survey reported that 27% of women had been sexually abused as children (Finkelhor, et al., 1990).

Although research in the past 20 years has increased public awareness of the extent of child sexual abuse, much of this information is based on the experience of young women. Prevalence rates from college samples are primarily based on the experience of women in their 20's. Two surveys have reported prevalence rates by cohort age. One in 1978 used a random sample of 930 women in San Francisco (Russell, 1986). The other is the 1985 *Los Angeles Times* survey. Prevalence rates for the cohorts from these two surveys are not directly comparable because of the 7 year difference between them and because the surveys used different definitions of sexual abuse. Russell's study separated women who were abused by a family member from those abused by someone outside the family. Because women could answer yes to each question, when the categories are combined the rates may be slightly inflated. The *Los Angeles Times* survey asked only whether the woman had ever been sexually abused. Prevalence rates by cohort from those two surveys are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentages of Women Sexually Abused as Children, by Cohort

Cohort Born	Percent Victimized	Population Estimate*
Before 1919	26	1,967,940
1919 - 1928	28	1,451,520
1929 - 1938	44	4,490,200
Russell, 1984		
Cohort Born	Percent Victimized	Population Estimate*
Before 1926	19	2,740,180
1927 - 1935	29	3,215,230
1936 - 1945	37	4,726,750
Finkelhor, et al., 1990		

*Population Estimate is the number of women in the each age cohort based on 1990 U.S. census data.

Although the results of the two surveys are not directly comparable, rates of child sexual abuse appear to be slightly higher for women from San Francisco. This may reflect the inflated rates that result from combining the two categories of sexual abuse in Russell's study, or the differences in rates may be due to regional differences. Other studies have reported higher rates for Pacific states (Finkelhor, et al., 1990). Using the more conservative prevalence rates from the *Los Angeles Times* survey and current population data and it can be estimated that nearly 6 million women now over the age of 60 experienced some form of child sexual abuse.

Long Term Effects of the Abuse

A multitude of studies have examined the relationship between adult adjustment and the experience of child sexual abuse. Early studies consisting of clinical samples found serious long term problems associated with the abuse, including depression, intense guilt, markedly low self-esteem, sexual dysfunctions, chronic anxiety, suicide, alcohol and drug addictions, promiscuity, prostitution, disproportionate marital difficulties, somatic complaints, lack of emotion especially in intimate or sexual context, and higher levels of acute and chronic dissociation or psychic numbing (Briere & Runtz, 1988; Gelinas, 1983; Herman, 1981; Herman, Russell, & Trocki, 1986). While results from studies with clinical samples first brought the extent of the problem to public awareness, problems such as psychiatric disturbances, family disruption, parental illness, and alcoholism that are common among those in clinical samples may compound the

relationship of child sexual abuse to adult functioning and confound our understanding of both factors.

More recent empirical studies that have included clinical as well as community samples have found, despite some variation, that women in the general population with a history of child sexual abuse have identifiable mental health impairment when compared to women without such a history. A cluster of studies indicate that women sexually abused as children are more likely than women who were not abused to report physiological problems, such as somatic disturbances, interpersonal problems including sexual disturbances and generalized emotional symptoms, including fear, anxiety, and depression (Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, & DaCosta, 1992).

Physiological Problems

Physiological responses can include sleeplessness, pain disorders, substance abuse, and somatization disturbances. Survivors of child sexual abuse have been significantly more likely to report somatization disorders which are believed to be ways in which anxiety is translated to excessive bodily concerns (Morrison, 1989; Briere, 1992). Survivors also reported higher rates of chronic pelvic pain without gynecological problems (Gross, Doerr, Caldirola, 1980; Walker, Katon, Harrop-Griffiths, Holm, Russo, & Hickok, 1988).

Interpersonal Problems

Several community based studies indicate that women with a history of child sexual abuse are more likely than women not abused to report interpersonal difficulties,

including problems relating to both men and women, continuing problems with parents, difficulty in parenting, and sexual problems. Studies using a combination of clinical and community samples report that incest survivors have strong feelings of anger and hostility towards their mother (DeYoung, 1982; Herman, 1981; Meiselman, 1978). Survivors have also reported difficulties in trusting others. Briere (1984) noted fear of men in 48% of childhood sexual abuse survivors in a clinical sample as opposed to 15% of women who were not abused. Incest survivors have reported significantly less support in parental partnerships and less confidence in their parenting abilities than either women whose fathers were alcoholic, or women who had no known risk during their childhood (Cole, Woolger, Power, & Smith, 1992).

Although college students and nurses who were sexually abused as children have not reported sexual problems (Greenwald, Leitenberg, Cado, Tarran, 1990; Alexander & Lupfer, 1987), several other studies indicate that women with a history of sexual abuse do report problems in sexual adjustment (Briere, 1992). For example, the *Los Angeles Times* national survey indicated that women who had been sexually abused were more likely to report dissatisfaction with their sexual relationships than women who were not abused (Finkelhor, et al., 1989). A study in the Los Angeles area found that 36% of women with a history of child sexual abuse had fear of sex, 32% had less interest in sex, and 35% had less sexual pleasure (Stein, Golding, Siegel, Burnam, Sorenson, 1988). Even compared to the base rate of sexual dissatisfaction in the general public, i.e., 21% of women in a

“normal” couple report sexual dissatisfaction, survivors of sexual abuse have greater difficulty in sexual relationships (Beitchman, et al., 1992).

A number of studies indicate that revictimization is higher for women who survived sexual abuse in childhood. Russell (1986) found that 65% of the incest survivors had been victims of rape compared to 36% of women who were not abused. Women in a college sample who were abused before the age of 13 were more likely to later report incidents of nonconsensual sex (Fromuth, 1986). Survivors were also more likely to report conflict with or fear of their husbands or sex partners in a clinical sample (Meiselman, 1978). Survivors were more likely than women not abused to report marital disruptions or physically violent husbands (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1989; Russell, 1986).

Psychological Symptoms

Survivors of the abuse have reported greater problems in emotional reactions and self-perceptions. For example, women sexually abused as children have scored higher on measures of anxiety in several studies, particularly when the abuse was accompanied by the use of force (Fromuth, 1986, Briere & Runtz, 1988; Herman & Schatzow, 1987). Clinical samples have indicated higher rates of dissociative symptoms, and lower scores on a self-esteem inventory for women who were sexually abused (Briere & Runtz, 1998; Alexander & Schaeffer, 1994; Bagley & Ramsey, 1985).

Depression is the most commonly reported symptom among adults molested as children in clinical samples and empirical studies confirm this relationship (Browne &

Finkelhor, 1986). Women who were sexually abused are more likely than women who were not abused to have experienced a major depressive episode and to have had more depressive episodes in their life (Stein, et al., 1988; Briere & Runtz, 1988). The abuse is also associated with a variety of abuse-related negative thoughts and beliefs that are associated with the later depressive symptoms (Briere & Runtz, 1993).

There is some empirical support for an association between child sexual abuse and subsequent substance abuse (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Peters (1984) and Herman (1981) both found that survivors of sexual abuse were more likely to report alcohol or other substance abuse problems than were women who were not abused. Higher rates of incestuous abuse have been noted in samples of women in treatment facilities for substance abuse (Janikowski & Glover, 1994).

Long Term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse and Older Women

The empirical research indicates beyond doubt that child sexual abuse increases the risk for later physical, psychological and/or social problems. Nearly all of this research, however, is based on the experience of younger women, particularly women in colleges and universities. Comparisons of middle age and older women to college women must be made with caution. Student survivors of child sexual abuse are thought to experience fewer difficulties with psychological adjustment than do survivors in community and clinical samples (Jumper, 1995). Student samples may include more well adjusted women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and women drawn from these populations may be too young to have exhibited long-term effects (Greenwald, et al.,

1990). Although prevalence surveys indicate that up to 37% of women over the age of 50 and 29% of women over the age of 60 have experienced child sexual abuse there are few references in practice literature or empirical research literature describing the nature of this abuse and its sequelae for older women.

From a developmental perspective, unresolved trauma from child sexual abuse may accumulate as a woman matures through her life stages (Allers, Benjack, & Allers, 1992). Alternately, certain stages of adult development may act as a catalyst for emergence of symptoms of child sexual abuse issues (Downs, 1993). Such stages include marriage and parenting, or the period of self-reflection that is a normative part of early middle age. Thus sexual and emotional intimacy after marriage are difficult for some women who were sexually abused as children (Cole & Putnam, 1992). Survivors have also reported renewed intrusion of memories of the abuse after childbirth (Parratt, 1993).

The effects of child sexual abuse may also emerge at different developmental points in older women's lives. Older victims of such abuse may then have greater problems with age related losses and changes such as loss of peer support, physiological changes, loss of roles and resources. Depression, elder abuse, and misdiagnosis of Alzheimer's dementia have all been traced to the residual symptoms of childhood sexual trauma for older women (Allers, et al., 1992). A recent study of older women in treatment for panic disorder revealed that forty-one percent had been sexually abused as children (Sheikh, Swales, Kravitz, Bail, & Taylor, 1994). These women had also suffered major depression, psychiatric hospitalization, or other mental health problems.

While some older women may be dependent on others for their own care, others are the primary caregivers for aging parents. One study indicates that incest victims in middle age experience considerable conflict about caregiving for their aging parents (Joseph & Rose, 1994). Their expectations about recovery from the incest conflicted with norms of eldercare. Despite their sense of societal expectations to provide care, most of the women in the study devised strategies to avoid caring for the parents who had abused them.

Intervening Factors

Although child sexual abuse can have long term and injurious effects, not all children are affected to the same extent by that experience (Conte & Schuerman, 1987; Finkelhor, 1984; Russell, 1986; Tsai, Feldman-Summers, & Edgar, 1979). The variability of responses is a complex problem, not well understood, and not easily researched. Recent studies have attempted to examine the differences by including a range of variables: circumstances related to the abuse and external factors such as family characteristics, involvement of authorities, and socio-economic status. Although some factors are consistent across studies, others are not. The discrepancy reflects the difficulty of studying a retrospective event that is still difficult for many women to talk about. Studies often are beset by small, non-random clinical samples and inconsistent measures that make comparisons between them difficult. Yet in spite of these difficulties, research about child sexual abuse indicates that some factors associated with the abuse and some

family characteristics may predict the severity of the effects of the abuse or may function as intervening variables among the circumstances and the effects of the abuse.

Factors Associated with the Abuse

Several variables or risk factors characteristic of the abuse have been examined to determine which are associated with more severe effects. These variables include frequency, duration, and severity of the abuse, as well as closeness of the relationship with the abuser (Russell, 1986; Briere and Runtz, 1988). A comparison among survivors of the abuse who sought therapy for problems associated with the it, a group of survivors who did not seek therapy and who identified themselves as well-adjusted, and a third group of women who had not been abused and who were not in therapy indicated that women seeking therapy for the abuse were significantly less well adjusted than the other groups on measures of psychosexual functioning and the MMPI (Tsai, et al., 1979). They were closer to adolescence at the time of the last abuse incident, had more frequent and longer duration of the abuse, and had more attempts of uncompleted intercourse than women in nonclinical group who had also been abused.

Two studies using random samples have examined the relationship between abuse circumstances and other intervening variables on long-term effects of that abuse (Peters, 1988; Wyatt & Newcomb, 1990). The first study found that duration of the abuse, older age at the last incident of abuse, and frequency of abuse, defined as the number of abuse incidents with different perpetrators, were significant predictors of psychological difficulty (Peters, 1988). Wyatt & Newcomb (1990) found more negative effects of the

abuse were directly predicted by two composite variables, closer proximity (relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, location of the abuse, in the home or out, and effect of the abuse on the family), and greater severity of abuse (number and type of abuse incidents and use of physical coercion).

Family Characteristics

Research on families in which child sexual abuse occurs indicates that, despite conflicting results, family characteristics may account for some of the variability of the effects of the abuse. The complexity and confusion in the research reflects the difficulty of assessing problems retrospectively, of separating differences between intra- and extra-familial abuse, and the multicollinearity of variables involved in explaining the variability of that abuse.

Establishment of temporal order is seen as a critical factor in establishing causality for the role of family characteristics in accounting for variability in the effects of the abuse (Ray, Jackson, & Townsley, 1991). However, the temporal ordering of family dysfunction and sexual abuse has not however been established. The distinction of temporal order is important because of the implications for coping and for treatment. If family dysfunction precedes sexual abuse then coping and interventions must address the specific problems in the family. If patterns of dysfunction are a consequence of the abuse, then the focus for the interventions and for coping is the abuse itself. Some experts caution that a “family oriented perspective” for intervention approaches for the treatment of the effects of child sexual is inappropriate until temporal order is established (Conte,

1986; Briere, 1992). These experts have, instead, urged clinicians and survivors to focus on factors directly related to the abuse itself, e.g., self-blame, dissociation, and other associated problems.

Some studies indicate that families in which sexual abuse occurs differ from families in which that abuse does not occur, regardless of the kind of abuse that occurred. Alexander & Lupfer (1987) found in a retrospective study of college students that cohesion and adaptability were lower in families where either type of child sexual abuse occurred than in families where no abuse occurred. Father-daughter incest, however, was associated with family values of paternal dominance, i.e., children were seen as subservient to adults and females as subservient to males. Another study of college students found that families where any kind of abuse occurred were less cohesive, less involved in recreational activities, less likely to encourage independence, and less organized in terms of mutual responsibilities, activities, and rules (Ray et al., 1991). This study, however, found no evidence of paternal dominance in father-daughter incest. These two studies indicate that family dysfunction may not be merely a function of the presence of a perpetrator in the family environment but rather a function of family characteristics that increase the vulnerability of the child to abuse by persons either inside or outside the family.

Women reporting incest have also reported decreased family cohesion and adaptability, and increased social isolation for themselves within the family (Harter, Alexander, & Neimeyer, 1988). Path analysis indicated that these factors significantly

predicted poorer social adjustment, and that when family characteristics were controlled, the sexual abuse was not significantly related to social adjustment. Thus family characteristics, such as lack of cohesion and adaptability, were related to poor social adjustment, regardless of the sexual abuse. However, abuse perpetrated by a father figure or abuse that included intercourse did predict poor adjustment beyond the influence of family characteristics.

In another sample of college women, those women who experienced intra- or extra-familial child sexual abuse reported more parental conflict than women who were not abused (Edwards & Alexander, 1992). Simultaneous regression analysis for the total sample indicated that parental conflict, beyond the effects of sexual abuse, significantly predicted greater psychological distress. Within the sub-sample of women who had been abused, severity of the abuse predicted distress. Fromuth (1986) also found that when family background was controlled for, child sexual abuse was not significantly related to long-term psychological adjustment. While these studies have not established whether family characteristics, such as lack of cohesion, lower adaptability, and increased conflict cause the abuse or are a consequence of it, they do indicate that those factors affect adult perception of social adjustment and distress.

Other studies indicate that parental warmth and support mediate the effects of the abuse. For adolescent girls who were sexually abused, better adjustment was associated with greater perception of the mother's support after disclosure (Johnson & Kenkel, 1991). Women sexually abused as children, but who identified themselves as well-

adjusted, reported that the factors that contributed to their adjustment were support from friends and family members in the form of assurance that as children, they were not at fault, had no reason to feel guilty, and were still worthy (Tsai, et al., 1979).

Parental support and family stress were lower and higher respectively for women who reported either incest or physical abuse, compared with women who were not abused (Wind & Silvern, 1994). Although stress was higher in families in which abuse occurred, it did not affect women's psychological adjustment, i.e., depression and low self-esteem, after controlling for parental support. Without parental support, abuse was significantly associated with poor adjustment, but with parental support, abuse no longer predicted poor adjustment. Thus parental support mediated the effects of sexual abuse. In contrast, both parental support and the abuse contributed independently to symptoms of PTSD.

Specific Family Roles: Mother

The mother's role in families where children have been sexually abused is somewhat controversial. Early research blamed mothers for the occurrence of incest and characterized them as emotionally needy, passive, colluding, and somehow contributing to the abuse (Birns & Meyer, 1993). More recent studies indicate that larger percentages of mothers have acted to protect their children when they discover the abuse, than have denied the abuse (Schonberg, 1992). A feminist perspective focuses on the circumstances in which women find themselves, i.e., powerless within their families, rather than on the mother's personality traits. From a this point of view, the problem of child sexual abuse has been described as a socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and gender phenomena, and

mothers are seen as secondary victims in families where a child is sexually abused (Barrett, 1993). Mothers in incestuous families are, certainly, more often the victims of battering, and more likely to have been incestuously abused themselves than mothers in the general population. (Truesdell, McNeil, & Deschner, 1986; Reis & Heppner, 1993; Goodwin, McCarthy, & Divasto, 1981).

Lack of maternal warmth was the strongest predictor of the risk of sexual abuse for women in a retrospective study of survivors of child sexual abuse (Peters, 1988). Controlling for maternal warmth did not, however, eliminate the relationship between severity of symptoms and abuse characteristics. A more recent study compared fifteen mothers and daughters in incestuous families with controls in non-incestuous families and found that mothers in incestuous families perceived greater amounts of family stress, greater communication difficulties, less confidence in their problem-solving effectiveness, and less personal control (Reis & Heppner, 1993). Problems in communications were defined as more closed communications, more dishonesty and distrust, and greater avoidance of communication.

Specific Family Roles: Father

Most of the research on child sexual abuse and parental roles focuses on the mother's role. Only a few studies have examined characteristics of fathers who commit incest. There is some indication that paternal dominance is more common in families where incest occurs (Herman, 1981; Alexander & Lupfer, 1987). Incest abusers have demonstrated social and relationship problems in some studies (Smith & Saunders, 1995).

Thus perpetrators of incest scored lower than norms on measures of psychological and social functioning, such as clarity of expression, respect for others, openness to others, acceptance of loss and separation, conflict resolution, empathy, trust, intimacy, and family health (Hanson, Lipovsky, & Saunders, 1994).

In summary, circumstances of the abuse, including severity, proximity, duration, frequency, and use of force, either singly or in combination, predict more severe outcomes such as depression or psychological problems. Certain family variables are also associated with poorer adjustment, whether the abuse was perpetrated by a family member or outsider. Families in which children were abused have been characterized by lack of cohesion and adaptive abilities. They also exhibited a lack of involvement of family members with each other, both in terms of emotional support, and closeness, and in lack of participation in activities that promote children's growth and development. Little evidence exists that implicates mothers as colluding in incestuous abuse, although in families where incest occurs mothers report having less control and greater problems in communication. Fathers who perpetrate abuse may have few individual and social functioning skills. Poorer social adjustment for victims may also be predicted when the abuse was perpetrated by father figures or includes intercourse. Finally, family support, particularly maternal support, has been found to mediate the negative effects of the abuse.

Theoretical Frameworks and Child Sexual Abuse

Although many factors related to increased trauma have been identified, only a few theoretical frameworks have been proposed to conceptualize it. These frameworks

include posttraumatic stress disorder, traumagenics, psychological adaptation or schema theory, and developmental theory.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was proposed as an attempt to explain the variation in individual responses to trauma. PTSD has been proposed to describe the experiences of survivors of devastating events: war, earthquakes, sexual assaults, and other victimizations (Donaldson & Gardner, 1985). PTSD was first defined as a reaction to a disturbing event in which the self is shattered or changed. Because the self is the center for organizing the meaning of experience, a serious disturbance or interference in its ability to function constitutes a trauma.

PTSD is defined as "the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event that is generally outside the range of usual human experience" (APA, 1987). PTSD is included in DSM- III-R as a severe stress disorder. Diagnostic criteria include four factors. The first factor is existence of a distressing event that is beyond the range of normal range of human experience (APA, 1987). Other factors include some form of reexperiencing the trauma in specific ways, dissociation, hyper-alertness, sleep disturbance, guilt, memory impairment, and concentration problems.

Traumagenic Dynamics

As a response to the lack of inclusiveness of PTSD as a defining model for the effects of child sexual abuse, Finkelhor and Browne (1985) have proposed traumagenic dynamics. This model distinguishes four factors that may explain the effects of child

sexual abuse. Those factors include traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization. Traumatic sexualization refers to a process in which the child's sexuality is shaped in a developmentally and interpersonally inappropriate manner. This may occur when children are rewarded for sexual behavior that is inappropriate to their level of development, thus teaching such children to use sexual behavior as a strategy for manipulating others. When force is part of the abuse, the child may associate fear with sexual feelings. Associating sexual behavior with rewards, or approval would explain the higher rates of prostitution and sexual problems for adult survivors (Briere, 1992; Tsai & Wagner, 1978).

Betrayal refers to the process that occurs when children learn that someone they trusted and depended on has done them harm. Women whose families disbelieved, blamed, or ostracized them would experience a greater sense of betrayal than those whose families were supportive. Betrayal may also occur when the child's sense of trust and belief in an adult is compromised.

Powerlessness refers to a dynamic in which the child's will, desires, and sense of efficacy are violated. Powerlessness may be reinforced when a child tells and is not believed, or when the abuse is repeated over time. Consequences of powerlessness include nightmares, insomnia, anxiety, and lack of efficacy and coping skills.

Stigmatization connotes the feelings of badness, guilt, and shame that are communicated to the child around the abuse experience and that then become

incorporated into the child's self-image. This dynamic may occur in many ways, especially from societal and family blame.

Psychological Adaptation

A model of psychological adaptation has been proposed to explain individual responses to several kinds of trauma (McCann, Sakheim, & Abrahamson, 1988). This broad, generalized model of the psychological consequences of victimization is based on a review of the empirical literature for studies of individual responses summarized across seven different trauma experiences. These include rape, childhood sexual or physical abuse, domestic violence, crime, disasters, and the Vietnam war.

Five categories of individual patterns of responses were delineated: cognitive, emotional, biological, behavioral, and interpersonal. These categories circumscribed every major response of victimization listed in the research literature. Thus emotional response patterns included fear, anxiety, depression, self-esteem disturbances, anger, guilt, and shame. Cognitive responses included perceptual disturbances. Biological responses consisted of physiological hyperarousal and somatic disturbances. Behavioral response patterns included aggressive and suicidal behaviors, substance abuse, impaired social functioning, and personality disorders. Finally, interpersonal patterns included sexuality problems, relationship problems, revictimization, and victim becoming the victimizer. Symptoms for the victims of child sexual abuse were found in each response pattern category in the represented studies.

This psychological adaptational model is based on schema theory, which suggests a complex relation between traumatic experiences and cognitive schemas. Schema theory suggests that a person's earliest life experiences shape stable cognitive structures that then filter later life experiences. Schemas are represented core beliefs or expectations about the self, others, and the world. Based on the studies reviewed, 5 major schemas of psychological and interpersonal functioning were noted which are especially affected by exposure to the particular forms of trauma. Included are schemas for safety, trust, power, esteem, and intimacy. In a reinforcing pattern, schemas develop for these areas and influence psychological adaptation in each of the 5 response categories. These responses in turn, influence subsequent life experiences which may confirm or disconfirm the schemas.

According to this theory, negative schemas may form in response to traumatic experiences. For example, negative schemas in the area of personal safety may form in response to child sexual abuse and may subsequently be associated with several belief patterns. Included is the belief that the self is vulnerable to future harm, injury, or loss, and the belief that one is incapable of protecting oneself from future trauma. These beliefs may in turn be associated with response patterns that include chronic and persisting anxiety, intrusive thoughts about danger, or fears of future victimization. An expectation of being unable to protect oneself from harm increases the likelihood that these beliefs and feelings will be perceived as threatening.

Negative schemas related to self-esteem may involve beliefs that the person is unworthy or bad. Response patterns associated with this schema may include feelings of self-blame, depression, guilt, shame, and self-destructive behaviors. Formation of a negative self-esteem schema may result because the child is unable to blame an abuser that they love and trusted. In this sense self-blame is adaptive for the child because it allows her to function in a maladaptive environment.

Thus this model of psychological adaptation to trauma proposes that negative schemas develop in response to the trauma of childhood sexual abuse in five areas: safety, trust, power, esteem and intimacy. The development of these negative schemas account for individual variation in response to the trauma through five response patterns: cognitive, emotional, biological, behavioral, and interpersonal. Those response patterns then include the fears, anxieties, guilt, depression, somatic complaints, social isolation, sexual problems, and self-blame noted in survivors of child sexual abuse.

Developmental Theory

Finally, a developmental framework has been suggested as a central organizing construct for understanding the effects of incest for children and young women (Newberger & Devos, 1988; Cole & Putnam, 1992). The developmental factors that influence a child's capacity to manage the stress of the abuse are understood in terms of the specific developmental tasks that are compromised by the stress. Thus the timing of the abuse is a factor in determining the impact (Downs, 1993).

One task of early and middle childhood is the integration of a secure sense of self within the restrictions of the social world. To accomplish these goals, children begin to integrate opposite aspects of themselves and need to develop sufficient self-control to inhibit impulsive or selfish acts for the sake of developing social relations. The intense guilt, shame and confusion that frequently is a consequence of the abuse can diminish the likelihood of the child's feeling secure enough to build friendships and receive social support outside the home (Cole and Putnam, 1992). Because sexual abuse is brought about by forces outside herself, a child may feel that she is not in control and feelings of incompetence and helplessness may grow out of that sense of loss. Sexually abused children have also experienced elevated levels of denial and dissociation, which are common coping responses for children this age (Downs, 1993).

Tasks of adolescence include development of abstract thought and self-revelation. At this stage, adolescents experience a multiplicity of selves, and one task of identity formation requires integration of these various selves into a unified self that is compatible with a self-view and the view of others (Cole & Putnam, 1992). Another factor in adolescence is the onset of puberty and emerging sexuality. Adolescents must integrate their developing sense of sexuality into their own self-definition and their social behavior. Social tasks of adolescence include the increased development of mutuality, intimacy, and exclusivity in friendships. All of these tasks may be jeopardized by sexual abuse. For example, sexual abuse in adolescence may result in a general sense of negative feelings toward one's body or one's self. Experiencing pleasurable feelings during the abuse can

confuse the adolescent, who may believe that she cooperated with the abuser or contributed to the abuse, leading to increased feelings of self-blame. Negative self-labels from that abuse, as well as negative attributions from others (such as the perpetrator), may solidify and form the basis for a future negative self-concept. The experience of sexual abuse may cause an adolescent girl to feel separate from other girls and may interfere with development of social support and intimate friendships.

Adolescent girls perceive interpersonal conflicts between one's own needs and the needs of others as moral dilemmas (Gilligan, 1982). This growing sense of herself existing in relation to others may make confrontation with the abuser or disclosure of the abuse more difficult.

In summary, from a developmental perspective, child sexual abuse interferes with specific normative tasks which include the development of a secure identity and social relations. These disturbances in normal development caused by the trauma have cognitive, emotional, and psychological repercussions and can interfere with the development of positive feelings of self-worth, integration of developing sexuality, and cognitive and social competence. The responses to the disturbances can include feelings of fear, betrayal, guilt, depression, dissociation, isolation, and sexual acting out.

Coping with the Abuse

Coping with adversity such as victimization or trauma has been defined in the broadest sense as the process by which people respond to stressful events or situations (Friedrich, 1988). It is a process that extends over time and that has the dual functions of

regulating emotional stress and problem solving. Emotion-focused strategies represent attempts to manage the negative emotions, such as fear, anger, or betrayal, that are often part of the response to threatening situations. They include such factors as wishful thinking, self-blame, and dissociation. Problem-focused responses include attempts to control, manage, or change the stressful situation (Backer & Meier, 1993). Coping processes, at best, allow the person to change the stressful events, or to come to terms with it. These processes, at least, allow the person to survive events over which they do not have control (Wortman, 1983; McCann, et al., 1988; Nurius, Furrey, & Berliner, 1992).

Coping effectiveness has been defined as the extent to which persons believe that their coping with the demands of an event produces a desired effect on their well-being and functioning (Backer & Meier, 1993). Coping processes may be either adaptive or maladaptive or a strategy that is initially adaptive may later become maladaptive. Wortman (1983) cautions that it is not easy to make judgments about how effectively a person is coping, since it is often misleading to apply specific criteria to the victim and because decisions about what constitutes effective coping are often tied up with questions of values. For example, despite the efforts to teach children to resist abusers, child victims of sexual abuse who passively submitted to the abuse were less affected than were those who made some effort to resist, escape, or avoid the abuse (Conte & Schuerman, 1987). The authors point out that these coping behaviors, resistance or submission, may actually describe general coping strategies in life, i.e., an active effort of

control events versus a general acceptance of events. "As such, either strategy may be more 'healthy' than an inability to deal with events or a tendency to fall apart in the face of certain events" (Conte, & Schuerman, 1987, pp. 210).

In comparison to other kinds of trauma such as rape or domestic violence, child sexual abuse is unique because it occurs during formative development when a principal need of the child is to count on primary attachments to caretakers who are nurturing and trustworthy (Herman, 1992). During that time children are naturally dependent on adults for safety and protection and do not have the same capacity to exert control over their environments that adults have. This lack of control and dependency may increase a normal tendency for helplessness and affect potential coping responses to the abuse.

Children then may develop patterns of coping responses that allow them to survive sexual abuse but that are based on their natural helplessness and dependency. These responses may be viewed as points on a continuum that range from wishful thinking and daydreaming to self-blame and dissociation (Courtois, 1993). All of the responses are adaptive in the sense that they are an attempt to respond to the abuse. Some of the strategies may develop into strengths and skills that serve the child (and later the adult) well. Others may be initially adaptive, in the sense that they allow the child to survive the abuse, but they may not be effective for the adult woman. Coping with child sexual abuse then may be seen as a series of distinct tasks or response patterns that may need to change over time.

Much of the research on coping with child sexual abuse has focused on the initial strategies that children use to respond to the abuse or by examining the stages in treatment that have been effective for adult survivors. Thus studies have focused on the coping strategies of adolescents who have been abused or the retrospective accounts of adult women in clinical samples. Studies with adult survivors of sexual abuse have noted a tendency for greater reliance on emotion focused strategies and have also found that strategies to be highly correlated with more negative symptoms (Long & Jackson, 1993; Johnson & Kenkel, 1991; Leitenberg, Greenwald, & Cado, 1992).

Emotion focused or problem solving strategies may represent an initial response to the abuse, but coping with long-term effects of child sexual abuse may be a developmental process that spans the life course. One study of incest survivors found women in their 30's and 40's were much more likely to explore in therapy the impact of sexual abuse, while younger women tended to focus on identity formation and intimacy. Women who had coped successfully with difficulties at one point adversely reacted to other stressors when their situation is changed (DiPalma, 1994).

Treatment Issues

Research with women who have resolved the effects of abuse without some form of treatment is limited. Most of the literature that identifies factors involved in the resolution of the effects is based on the experience of women either currently in treatment or who have been in treatment previously. This clinical literature identifies many approaches to treatment for survivors of child sexual abuse, including psychodynamic,

cognitive-behavioral, and psychoeducational (Briere, 1992; Jehu, Klassen, & Gazan, 1985; Courtois, 1993). These approaches target, either singularly or in combination, the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, physiological, and/or social responses to the abuse. Important in the successful resolution of the effects of child sexual abuse, according to the clinical literature, are issues of self-blame and other cognitive distortions, disclosure, control, and meaning-making.

Self-Blame

Child sexual abuse, like other traumas, may shatter basic assumptions about the self and others. Specifically these assumptions are that the world is benevolent, meaningful and that the self is worthy (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). A child's cognitive responses to the betrayal by trusted adults, and to a situation that she may not be able to change, typically include self-blame, negative self-images, and guilt (Roth & Leibowitz, 1988). For a child who is unable to exert control in an adult world, who cannot afford to believe that adults would betray her, and who may be unable to express anger at the abuse, self-blame may simply be a survival tactic, but may not be adaptive for the adult (McCann, et al., 1988).

Self-blame is higher among women sexually abused as children and is correlated with the negative effects of that experience (Briere, 1992; Herman, 1992). In one study women who were sexually abused as children have reported that they had felt greater levels of self-blame as children than as adults (Hoagwood, 1990). Women who continued to blame themselves were more depressed and had lower self-esteem or a lower self-

concept than those who did not blame themselves. Those with the strongest feelings of self-blame were the most depressed. Women who blamed their abuser as adults were less depressed, had higher self-esteem and higher self-concept. Wyatt and Newcomb (1990) examined attribution of blame as one of several mediators for the negative effects of child sexual abuse. Self-blame predicted more negative effects and was predicted by psychological coercion and occurrence of abuse away from home.

Coping with self-blame and other cognitive distortions involves restructuring many negative cognitions about the self and others. Change may come from restructuring techniques that focus the woman's attention first on their distorted thoughts, then on learning to use alternative, more constructive thoughts (Jehu, Klassen, & Gazan, 1985). This is a sequential process in which the woman first recognizes the distorted beliefs, learns to connect them to the abuse, and then attempts to change them (Draucker, 1992; Roth & Newman, 1991).

Secrecy and Disclosure

Children rarely report child sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1979; Summit, 1982). More than half of women who were incestuously abused did not reveal the abuse while they remained at home (Herman, 1981). Children have been reluctant to disclose the abuse because in the past they have been blamed for assaults and have even been accused of seductive behavior. Children also frequently feel shame and guilt which may combine with feelings of intimidation, and fear of retaliation or separation of the family, to reduce the likelihood that they will seek help. MacFarlane (1986) emphasizes that abusers most

often threaten their victims so they will participate in the abuse and so that they will later refrain from telling anyone. Thus a child's fear of the abuser and of repercussions for revealing the abuse are difficult to overcome. Although secrecy may compound the impact of the trauma by increasing the victim's isolation (Schatzow & Herman, 1989), several recent studies indicate that disclosure of the abuse may actually be harmful for children (Lamb & Edgar-Smith, 1994).

Roesler (1994) found in a retrospective study of adult women who experienced child sexual abuse that those who told in childhood reported a significantly worse reaction to disclosing the abuse than did women who waited until they were adults. If the first person that the child told about the abuse had a negative reaction, then that child was more likely later to have symptoms of PTSD and dissociation. Incest survivors in another study were more likely as children to disclose the abuse to family members; young women were more likely to tell friends, family members, or spouses; and women in early middle age were most likely to tell their therapists (Roesler & Wind, 1994). Again, those waiting to disclose the abuse until they were adults experienced more positive responses than those who disclosed the abuse at an earlier age.

Control

A range of negative emotions, such as fear, anger, helplessness, or betrayal, are part of the child's response to the abuse. Adults may continue to feel these emotions as well as shame, loss, worthlessness, stigmatization, and alienation (Roth & Lebowitz, 1988). A common coping strategy for all trauma victims is to deny or dissociate from

their feelings. Although initially successful in controlling these negative emotions, continued denial or dissociation may result in a generalized numbness. Victims of trauma may not know how to manage the intensity of emotions that have been denied for years. Thus what began as a coping strategy may complicate emotional adaptation for the adult survivor.

With few exceptions, i.e., cases of extreme or chronic trauma, integration of the emotional impact of the trauma is necessary for resolution of child sexual abuse (Clarke, 1993; Herman, 1992). Integration is a process that occurs over time and includes several stages. These stages involve learning to recognize and experience emotions associated with the trauma, learning to recognize those emotions as a result of the abuse, and learning to control the intensity of the emotions (Roth & Newman, 1991). In this way the years of denial or dissociation are unlearned.

A variety of adaptations are involved in the resolution or management of behavioral or physiological problems. Relaxation training, systematic desensitization, exercise, and supervised medications have all been used to help survivors of child sexual abuse to gain control of physiological responses (Herman, 1992; Dye & Roth, 1991). Some of the behavioral and physiological responses, of course, also may change as a consequence of cognitive and emotional adaptations.

Meaning-making

Meaning-making includes attempts by the person to form positive assumptions about themselves and their world, thus coming to terms with the abuse, or finding

meaning in the experience. Meaning-making includes the person's story-like construction of events that include explanations, descriptions, predictions about relevant future events, and affective reactions (Harvey, Orbuch, Chwalisz, & Garwood, 1991). Finding meaning in trauma is an integral part of the resolution of that experience (Silver, Boon, & Stones, 1983).

One of the factors involved in this construction of meaning is the interpretation of a sense of benefit from the experience. Survivors have reported an increased ability to relate to other victims, a greater understanding of the cause of the abuse, becoming stronger or more aware of their strength, and increased self-understanding (Draucker, 1992; Silver, et al., 1983). Although studies have noted the importance of the search for meaning in the resolution of the trauma experience, it must be emphasized that it is frequently more difficult for survivors of child sexual abuse than for victims of other kinds of trauma (Harvey, et al., 1991). For women who have experienced severe trauma, finding meaning, or account making may be an ongoing life time process (Silver, et al., 1983; Herman, 1992).

In coming to terms with the abuse, women have found ways to cope with painful memories that may, at times become intrusive (Herman & Schatzow, 1987). Unwanted memories are reported to be triggered by intimacies such as hugging a friend, being touched on the shoulder, or sexual encounters. Even such innocent occurrences as an upper respiratory infection might trigger a memory of abuse (Kondora, 1993). While disclosure of the abuse may be difficult for a child, it is considered to be part of the

meaning-making process for adult survivors of the abuse. Sharing these experiences with other survivors has been helpful for many women, and group treatment is thought to be more effective for survivors of incest and child sexual abuse than individual therapy (Briere, 1989; Hays, 1987; Joy, 1987). The ability to tell their story and include their accounts of pain and anguish to empathic listeners may represent invaluable acts of meaning (Orbuch, Harvey, Davis, & Merbach, 1994).

Thus the stages of coping described in treatment literature indicate that resolution of the effects of the child sexual abuse in clinical samples is a multi-dimensional process that occurs over time and that involves gaining control of negative emotions, learning to manage physiological effects, and understanding the impact of the abuse in their lives. These processes allow the woman to reconstruct her story, with fresh appraisals of the experience (Clarke, 1993; Herman, 1992).

Summary

Child sexual abuse is a serious problem for women in this country, with 19% to 33% of women estimated to have been abused. Although public awareness of the problem is recent, the problem is not a new one, and nearly 6 million women over the age of 60 are estimated to have been sexually abused as children. Based on the experience of younger women, long term consequences have been traced to the abuse, including impairments in psychological, physiological, and interpersonal functioning. Characteristics of the abuse, such as invasiveness, duration, frequency, and closeness of the abuser to the child, have been found to explain the severity of the symptoms. Family

characteristics, such as lack of cohesion and adaptability, appear to predispose children to the risk of sexual abuse as well impact their later social and psychological functioning. Family support, particularly maternal support, appears to mediate the effects of the abuse. Several theories have been proposed to explain the variation in the severity of the effects of the abuse, including PTSD, traumagenic dynamics, psychological adaptation, and developmental theory. Traumagenic dynamics and PTSD both describe the effects of child sexual abuse but neither theory provides a mechanism to explain them. The theories that seem to best fit and explain the variations in the effects of the abuse are developmental and psychological adaptation/schema theory, but these theories have not been tested.

Coping with the abuse in the most minimal sense describes how a person responds to stressful situations. Survivors of child sexual abuse more frequently use emotion-focused coping strategies, including denial, wishful thinking, or keeping feelings to oneself. Resolution of child sexual abuse ultimately involves emotional, cognitive, social, behavioral and physiological adaptation. A variety of interventions have been used, including skills training, psychoeducational, psychodynamic, and cognitive-behavioral groups. These interventions combine emotional work with cognitive restructuring and account-making in a staged process of learning to experience and control emotions and find meaning in the past. Child sexual abuse does not necessarily equate with dysfunction. It may impact psychological and social functioning, but it is not necessarily destiny. Rather, it may represent a series of challenges for the survivors and for social

workers alike. As William Stafford pointed out, we must be “awake” and recognize the patterns of struggle and growth that we know exist, lest we perpetuate the initial neglect or abuse. Acceptance and empathy are the clear signals needed to step away from darkness that can surround all of us.

Location of the Researcher

Part of giving “clear signals” includes an attempt to locate who I am. Rosaldo (1993) points out that the analyst is a cognitive, emotional and, hopefully, ethical being who “constructs knowledge through contexts of shifting power relations that involve varying degrees of distance and intimacy.” He writes of the impossibility of being a detached observer, and instead urges researchers to recognize that they bring to bear multiple sources of knowledge in the process of interpretation. Knowledge reflects the person who constructs it, and the social position of both the analyst and the informant must be considered as a contextual factor. Science has frequently hidden the researcher in a mask of objectivity or neutrality. The end result is that knowledge of others is constructed from “nowhere” because the researcher has no voice, body, class, or gender (Fine, 1994). While I recognized that objectivity was neither possible nor desirable in conducting this study it was another step to locate myself in the writing of it. Having asked women to reveal their life stories, I feel compelled to explain who I am and become more visible in this research study. Perhaps my disclosure will enable the reader to better evaluate my claims and to understand more thoroughly the context of the study.

Family background

I am a white woman raised in a blue collar family that moved into the middle class before I left home. My father was a union organizer in the 1930's and questioned authority all of his life. I learned from him to ask questions and not to believe something to be true because it is held to be so by a number of people or by those in authority. At the same time I grew up in the 1950's and 1960's and felt that my experience did not fit the dominant model. I was uncomfortable with power and felt that my personal values of cooperation, collaboration, and non-consumptive living conflicted with mainstream society. Until I was middle-aged I lived outside of established professions, working as a janitor, a surveyor, or in seasonal construction jobs. I lived with one man for 15 years. We lived in a small frame house that we built, with no central heating and with no running water. In my late 30's I returned to college because I wanted to be more involved in my community. I entered research through an interest in horticulture and worked as a research technician for several years. During the time that I finished a bachelors and began a masters in horticulture. I helped to organize a women's support group that introduced me to the work of Evelyn Fox Keller, Jean Baker Miller, Carol Gilligan, and other feminists. My participation in this group helped me to understand why I had lived outside of society for many years, why some of my values conflicted with society. Being able to talk about who I was and how I felt increased my confidence of working within established power structures. I finished the master's degree and entered a doctoral program in horticulture.

I left that program at the beginning of my second year to care for the man I had lived with who had been diagnosed with cancer. Although we had lived apart for three years I was his best friend. After his death I realized that I wanted work that was directly connected to people and to social problems and I entered the Master of Social Work program at the University of Washington.

Research Interest

I became interested in the experience of older women through Naomi Gottlieb's class on older women. In a class with Dr. John Gibson someone raised a question about the experience of older survivors of sexual abuse. No one had answers. During the second year of the program I wrote, with Dr. Gibson, a review of the literature of older women who had been sexually abused as children. I also did a semi-structured survey of 20 practitioners in Seattle who had worked with these women. The results of that survey indicated that older women did seek help for that experience, and that practitioners with knowledge of geriatric mental health and issues of child sexual abuse had more clients disclose that they had been abused. The lack of information in the professional literature about the experience of these women compelled me to enter the social welfare doctoral program for research training. Although national surveys estimated that several million older women had been abused, no one at that time had written of their experience. I knew that this was not a major social problem, nor the one most important to older women. At the same time it seemed to me that the lack of information about these women reflected societal discomfort with sexual abuse and neglect of older women in general. Like my

father, I resisted the best advice to find a broader, more easily studied problem, and pursued this topic. I was not sexually abused as a child, and I can not pretend to know what that experience means to any woman. I hope that this study increases our knowledge of these women's experience

Paradigm Shift

Until I entered the doctoral program I knew and accepted one view of science, an endeavor by dispassionate, objective people to determine, using probability theory, what is true. In the course of my first year I took a class in qualitative research with Dr. Edwina Uehara. That class affected me more than any class I've ever taken. I learned that the model of science that I had learned as the only way to generate "truth" was one of several models or paradigms. The beliefs I had understood as facts were simply world views. I learned to try to distinguish the assumptions that undergird the different models of research. That class was also my first exposure to grounded theory. We practiced inductive analytic coding on a transcript from one of Dr. Uehara's research projects, an examination of everyday violence. The interviewee was an African American woman living in a housing project in Chicago. The class was fascinating and exciting, but it disturbed me to break apart this woman's story with the coding process. Different members of the class were able to analyze her strategies for coping, the social constraints of her daily life, but no one was able to examine what daily violence meant to her. I left the class wanting to find another way to analyze data, one that focused more on the person's experience and sense of meaning. At the end of the class I began to search for

another means of analysis and focused on narrative analysis for two reasons. It used larger portions of the respondent's text in the analysis and the premise was that how we construct the events in our lives in stories underlies our sense of meaning of those events. I read Catherine Riessman's Narrative Analysis (1993) and Elliot Mishler's Research Interviewing (1986). Those works led me to the form of narrative analysis that I chose to use. I also read Charlotte Linde's Life Stories (1993) and Jerome Burner's Acts of Meaning (1990). These works proposed an integration of individual stories or narratives within a larger, more unified life story perspective. It seemed an entirely appropriate way to examine the experience of women in their 50's, 60's, or 70's. With the support and encouragement of Naomi Gottlieb as my chair, I constructed a dissertation proposal for an interpretive study of older women sexually abused as children using their life stories as a form to gather the data and using narrative analysis to analyze their stories.

Feminist Perspective

Since my participation in the women's' support group in the early 80's I had been interested in women's issues. As I began the analysis for my study I used as a guide several suggestions by Abigail Stewart (1994) for a feminist perspective in examining the lives of women. These strategies have been my guide as I analyzed the life stories of the women in my study. They include the following suggestions:

1. Look for what has been overlooked, unconceptualized and not noticed, but what has been central to women's experience.

2. Analyze your own role or position as it affects your understanding and the research process.
3. Identify women's agency, choice, and action in the midst of social constraint.
4. Use the concept of gender as an analytic tool. This means that the concept of what it is to be a woman varies, and that who we actually experience ourselves to be varies. Thus I tried to understand how the subjects in my study see themselves as women and what that means to them.
5. Explore the precise ways in which gender defines power relationships and in which power relationships are gendered.
6. Identify other significant aspects of an individual's social position and explore the implications of that position. Race, class, and sexual orientation are features of individuals and must be examined. For example, how does class shape opportunities, relationships, activities, and ideology. These features of individuals must be examined within an explicit historical framework.
7. Avoid the search for a unified or coherent self or voice. Resist the effort to structure the different voices and selves in an effort to control or impose unity on what is in fact multiple and even disorderly senses of selves.

I have attempted to use these guidelines throughout the analytic stages of this interpretive study. In the next chapters I will outline the methods of the research and then present a triptych of lives, a narrative analysis of the life stories of three women and a summary of that analysis. Following that, I will present a cross case examination of the

abuse and the effects of it in the lives of the informants in the study. I will also examine the ways that women have coped with the effects of the abuse. Finally, I will discuss the results of the study and the implications for social work.

Chapter 2 Methodology and Methods

from A Happy Childhood

It turns out you are the story of your childhood
and you're under constant revision
like a lonely folktale whose invisible folks

are all the selves you've been,
shadows in fog, gray glimmers at dusk,
and each of these selves had a childhood

it traded for love and grudged to give away,
now lost irretrievably, in storage
like a set of dishes from which no food,

no Cream of Wheat, no rabbit in mustard
sauce, not even a single raspberry,
can be eaten until the afterlife,

which is only childhood in its last
disguise, all radiance or all humiliation,
and so it is forfeit a final time.

which is not awful, but only breathtaking.
There's no truth about your childhood,
though there's a story, yours to tend,

like a fire or garden. Make it a good one
since you'll have to live it out, and all
its revisions, so long as you all shall live,

for they shall be gathered to your deathbed,
for they'll have known to what you and they
would come, and this one time they'll weep for you.

William Matthews

Introduction

How do we study and understand our lives? Do we look at life as just a series of events. Is there a true life, captured by looking closely at these events that make up one's existence? How do we convey what these events have meant? Does the truth of anyone's life exist as a singular concept, or does it change and shift with interpretation? Are the ways of looking at anyone's life simply an extensive set of lenses that let us see multiple possibilities? How is the past reflected in our present? Are we, as William Mathews said, "the story of our childhood" or are we continually determined by how we live out our early and late adult years? What does it mean to be under "constant revision," with multiple selves? If we are to be seen as constantly changing and revising our experience, how do we capture that in research? These questions reflect the complexity of examining an individual life. They also reflect the growing use of life stories and narrative analysis as a means of examining individual lives and personal meaning.

The data in this study were collected in the form of life stories and analyzed with two methods commonly used for interpretive studies, narrative analysis and analytic inductive coding. The organization of this chapter follows the progression of the study. It begins with the implementation of the study, including sampling methods, recruitment, interviewing practices, and transcription strategies. Next, life stories and their components are defined. For this study, a form of narrative analysis is used that is based on the use of narrative structures defined by Labov and Waletzky (1967). I will define and illustrate the structural components and other discourse units that make up life stories,

and describe the process of analytic inductive coding used to develop themes across cases. Finally the issues of reliability, validity, and the limitations of the study are discussed.

Implementation of the study

Sampling and Recruitment

I began this study intending to use a purposive sample in a large metropolitan area of the Pacific Northwest. Fifty-five is now considered to be the beginning of old age (Hooyman & Kiyak, 1993), therefore I targeted women over the age of 55 who had been sexually abused as children. The definition of child sexual abuse was based on the work of David Finkelhor and Diane Russell (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990; Russell, 1986). The definition was generally presented as “being touched as a child in a way that made you feel uncomfortable.” The definition also included specific acts of attempted intercourse, oral sex, sodomy, genital touching, sexual kissing, pornographic picture taking, sexual exhibitionism, or forced or coerced sexual behavior imposed on a child. Childhood was defined as the time before the age of 18 (Russell, 1986). Human subjects requirements of the University of Washington were obtained before recruitment began.

Because of the sensitive nature of child sexual abuse, I decided that I would not contact women directly about the study, but would rather attempt to reach them through flyers, advertisements, or through a trusted person. I placed numerous phone calls and sent many flyers (Appendix A) to social workers and other personnel at nursing homes,

senior centers, retirement homes, churches, a sexual assault center, and women's health care centers. I explained my study to these people and asked if they could mention the study to any women that they knew, or if they could post a flyer in their facility that women would see. I spoke about the study to a support group of older women at a local senior center, and asked if they could mention my study to friends. I also spoke in person to a group of social workers at a community mental health center. Several of the social workers there said that they had clients in their case loads who fit the parameters of the study. However these women were chronically mentally ill and we decided that talking about their life story or the abuse might present a risk of destabilization.

This recruitment yielded no volunteers. I was frequently told that this was a subject "too private to talk about" or was "too invasive and harmful" to mention. At the same time I found that many people were interested in the study and talked to their friends and neighbors about it. Several times people that I met said that they knew of someone who fit the parameters of the study, but when given information about the study, these women declined to volunteer. Other times I was told by social workers that they had known women in this age group who had disclosed abuse, but the women had since died or become too mentally frail to participate. I was frequently told by staff in nursing homes that their facilities included women with dementia who may have been abused. This belief was based on things that the women would say, such as "don't let him touch me," or "I don't want him watching me." Because of the women's mental condition however,

they were not possible volunteers. In short, although I initially made many contacts I found few volunteers.

Instead, I found 13 women through what I came to call a serendipitous process. These women volunteered for my study basically through two means, either by responding to an advertisement or through the help of key informants. Flyers about the study were sent to approximately 1200 retired University of Washington staff and faculty. Two women receiving this flyer contacted me and volunteered. A notice of the study published in a Crone newsletter inspired four women to volunteer (Crone is a national activist organization of women over the age of 55 who are interested in issues of women and aging). Through the efforts of a therapist in another city who heard about the study, three women volunteered. One woman heard about the study through another doctoral student's research project and consented to talk to me. Finally, as I described the study to various women that I met in social settings, three responded that they fit the description and were interested in participating. Without the help of the therapist and without the social context that allowed me to explain the purpose of my study, I would have had a much smaller sample. Thus although my sample is a purposive sample, many of the women found their way into the study serendipitously.

Interviewing

Because of the sensitive nature of the study, I identified two therapists who agreed to work at a reduced fee with any participants who were upset by the interview process and who wished to talk to a professional about problems resulting from the interview. I

explained the study briefly and each woman signed the consent form (Appendix B). The interviews were conducted interpersonally, rather than attempting to be objective, I offered the women encouragement and support. I allowed each woman the freedom to begin her life story at any point in her life and to tell it in her own way. I tried to restrict my comments and questions until she had completed her life story, but did not hesitate to offer non-lexical signals of comfort and reassurance. If women asked me questions, I answered them. For example, one woman asked me if I thought that sexual problems that she traced to the abuse were innate. I responded that I did not think that they were innate at all. I also told her that if she wished, I could give her the names of therapists in her area who could work with her and her husband.

Interviews generally took place in the home of the participant, although one woman asked her therapist to be present during the interview. Consequently that interview took place in the therapist's office. One interview took place on campus of the University of Washington, because the woman had recently moved and was not yet unpacked. Because one woman's roommate came home unexpectedly, our follow-up interview took place in my car. Interviews generally lasted an hour and a half, although several lasted from two to three hours.

Several times women indicated some discomfort before the interview started, and when this occurred, I asked if she would like to discontinue the interview that day, or cancel it entirely. Without exception the women said that they wanted to do the interview and then continued with it. I began by explaining the study and showing the consent form.

I then said to the woman, “Knowing that I’m interested in the experience of older women who were sexually abused as children, could you tell me your life story.” I prepared a list of questions (Appendix C), to guide the study. If the participant had not answered those questions during the context of telling her life story, I asked them at the end of the interview. Questions were changed slightly as the data were collected in accordance with theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978). For example, because several women traced sexual problems to the abuse, I included a question about sexual responses.

Women in this study told their stories with difficulty, a struggle indicated by tears and hesitation. Every woman in the study expressed interest in helping other women who have been abused, and said that if telling their story helped another woman, then the discomfort was worth it. Every interview included time for debriefing. We spoke of the interview process and of each woman’s life story. I expressed my gratitude for their courage in telling me their stories and my sense of their strength in being able to survive what has been, for some women, very painful circumstances.

With few exceptions, the women had regained their composure and either spoke easily of their present life, or answered my questions calmly by the time the interviews ended. One woman began the interview on the porch of her house, with the chairs positioned so that I was unable to look directly at her. By the time the interview ended, she invited me into her house, showed me around, pointing out her art work and pictures of her family. Another woman ended our interview with questions about her life and indicated some disturbance about her current situation. She declined offers of referrals to

two therapists or to a mental health clinic with a sliding scale. We spent some time talking about her life now, and different ways to look at it. One month after the interview she sent me a postcard expressing her interest in the study, the topic, and her feeling of the importance of breaking the “silence” of the experience. A tabular description of the women is included in Appendix D. All names and other identifying information have been changed to protect the women’s confidentiality.

Transcription

I transcribed all of the interviews with the perspective that transcription is a not simply a technical process, with the goal of merely producing an accurate and objective textual representation of the talk. Rather, transcription is considered to be part of the interpretive process (Silverman, 1993). As Mishler (1991) points out, transcription procedures reflect theoretical views about relations between language and meaning as well as the aims of the study. I would emphasize, along with others, that transcripts do not tell the entire story of the interview. They do not include non-verbal cues: gestures, tone, and vocal inflections that also are an important indication of meaning. The transcripts of these interviews must be viewed as representation, rather than as truth. They are my attempt to capture within limits, what a person said on one particular day under specific circumstances.

Transcription involves close repeated listening to the recordings which may reveal previously unnoticed aspects of the interview. Because much of the analysis is dependent on how the woman tells her story, as well as on the story itself, I attempted to achieve a

close rendering of the tape recording. It took me an average of eight to ten hours to transcribe one and a half hours of tape. After I had transcribed the tape using a dictaphone machine that allowed me to change the speed, I played the tape through at normal speed, for a final check. However, I learned that no matter how closely and how often I listened to the tape, I could hear something new each time I went back and listened to it.

I typed out the dialogue, using pauses and intonation to indicate punctuation. My comments are displayed in brackets. Although there were times when some of my comments were murmured as the woman spoke, particularly the non-lexical um-hmms, and ohs, I inserted them at the end of the nearest of her words. That is, I did not indicate my comments as interruptions because they did not stop the flow of talk. I indicated pauses of three seconds in parenthesis as (p), pauses longer than three seconds were timed and noted in parenthesis, i.e., (4). I used italics to show stressed words, indicating when the woman raised her voice or changed her tone. Laughter was indicated by enclosing in parenthesis that either she laughed, or I laughed or we laughed together. Crying was also noted. I used xxxxx to indicate the rare instance when I could not understand a word, despite repeated listening.

I have used the various discourse units defined in this chapter throughout the analyses. I have displayed them as a series of single-spaced clauses. I chose this method of displaying the text because it emphasizes these forms, and represents the way that the woman tells her story. I used the following abbreviations to indicate the structural parts of the narratives subsequently defined: AB for abstract; OR for orientation; CA for

complicating action, EV for evaluation; R for resolution and CO for coda. Two sets of numbers are included for each discourse form. The first indicates the line number of the form. The second number indicates the line number from the transcript. Where clauses are split between lines, I have used the line number that contains the largest section of the clause. For example, the following narrative, used throughout this chapter is shown below, with the appropriate structures labeled and line numbers indicated. Because this is a conjectured narrative, the second set of line numbers represent hypothetical line numbers.

1	33	AB	This one time was different, then everything changed.
2	33	OR	It was winter, dark, always dark and cold
3	35	CA	this night I woke up at 4:00
4	36	OR	and he had not come home.
5	36	EV	I just thought "I'm not doing this anymore"
6	37	EV	I didn't want to be tired the next day
7	37	EV	I just felt so fed up
8	38	OR	It was cold out,
9	38	CA	I got up and put on my parka, my warmest boots
10	38	CA	and began to walk in the dark towards town.
11	39	CA	I kept going all the way to my sister's house.
12	39	CA	I beat on the door until I woke her up.
13	40	CA	I stayed there that night
14	40	CA	He couldn't find me when he got home
15	41	CA	and when he found me he said "I'm sorry"
16	41	EV	I felt so relieved
17	41	EV	I thought why didn't I do this before
18	41	R	So I guess I put an end to it myself, by what I did,
19	41	CO	Now things are different,
20	42	CO	he is too old to stay up all night
21	42	CO	and he works every day too.

This example shows the way that various discourse units are displayed in the text of the analysis. By examining the second set of numbers, the reader can see where I have

omitted part of the text. In this way I indicate to the reader my reconstruction of individual discourse units as well as my reconstruction of the original story. The reader then knows where I have reduced parts of the interview, or shifted parts of the text from one section of interview to another. This method reinforces my recognition that analysis is an interpretive, constructive process.

I would also emphasize that distinguishing the discourse forms is an interpretive process. I used linguistic markers and nonlexical signals to indicate the beginning of the discourse units. For example, “and then there was another time” indicated the beginning of a story. A long pause often preceded an explanation, as did words like “because” or “and yet.” I used pauses and intonation to help me determine the beginning of the clauses. Labeling the parts of the narratives was an interpretive endeavor as well. Alternative interpretations are of course possible, depending on the perspective of the investigator. Where one unit of discourse begins or ends and whether a clause is an orientation or an evaluative clause depends on the judgment of the analyst.

Life Story

Life stories are increasingly used in the social sciences as a means of examining individual experience and meaning across the life course (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992; Linde, 1993; Cohler, 1991). A life story is formally defined as “the individual stories and other discourse units that are told by an individual during his or her lifetime” (Linde, 1993). It is a “plausible, chronological, and coherent narrative that reconstructs the development of the present state of affairs” (Slavney & McHugh, 1984). Life stories may

be told at any time in a person's life. They draw together specific information in such a way that that the person's current state seems to be the logical or the inevitable outcome of the past.

Life stories are more than a recital of events from our past, or a collection of interesting stories, they represent the way that people organize their experiences. As the narrator selects particular elements of her experience and provides explanations of that experience, she says "this is what happened to me and why." In this way, life stories communicate to the listener what the events have meant in a person's life (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). Adverse life events, whether in the form of a personal misfortune or natural catastrophe, may represent a challenge to this construction of meaning. Thus the examination of disruptions and problems in life stories provides information about the manner in which a particular adversity is experienced, how it is understood, and whether problems are posed in the resolution of the adversity (Cohler, 1991). Life stories are then a valuable means of interpreting the kind of lives older women sexually abused as children have lived: a tragedy, a life of choices, a life of victimization, or one of recovery.

Life stories do not exist in isolation, rather they are a product of interpersonal interaction. They are influenced by social contexts, by cultural conventions of telling, and by the audience (Bruner, 1984). In a research setting life stories are an interactive process between interviewer and the participant (Rosenthal, 1993). For example, I asked women to tell me their life story in the context of my study, which is the experience of older women sexually abused as children. In this way, I provide the overall theme for a

selective process because my question influences what the woman considers to be relevant and how she develops the thematic and temporal links between various experiences. Life stories also vary according to the emotional context of the interview. The extent that I was able to communicate acceptance and belief influenced how the participants in this study told their story, what they included or what they omitted.

Life stories are discontinuous, constantly added to and changed over the course of a lifetime, so that to record the entire life story is impossible. The units included in a life story are those with a point about the speaker at the particular time and in the particular context of the telling. In practice, new stories are integrated and old ones are dropped or revised in a process of reduction and inclusion. As William Matthews said, we are “under constant revision” as we integrate new experiences and as our understanding of our past changes across the life course. Life stories are constructed in the sense that they vary according to changing circumstance and understandings. Not only are some stories dropped and others added, but the stories themselves change as the teller’s understanding changes.

This instability of life stories gives rise to questions about truth and verification. This has increasingly become an important issue with unanswered questions about the validity of repressed and recovered memories for survivors of sexual abuse. I have assumed, for this study, both perspectives of those working with narratives and those working with survivors of sexual abuse (Sarbin, 1995; Morrow & Smith, 1995). That is, I believe life stories to be socially determined constructions. I believe that the women in

this study have recounted to me what they believe to be true events in their lives.

However, my concern is less with historical truth than with how these women have interpreted their experience, what meanings they have found, and how they communicate their perceptions. As Peacock and Holland (1993) point out, life stories “do not connote that the narration is true, that the events narrated necessarily happened.” Rather they indicate the meaning that events have for the narrator at the time of the telling.

Although life stories are constructions that change and evolve with time, with no one account regarded as the final truth, they are constrained by certain factors. First, life stories are culturally determined. As Polanyi (1985) says, “stories, whether fictional or non-fictional, formal and oft-told, or spontaneously generated, can have as their point only culturally salient material generally agreed upon by members of the producer’s culture to be self-evidently important and true.” Because life stories are interpersonally determined, they are limited by the listener’s willingness to believe. Life stories are also constrained by the narrator’s awareness of the social consequences of lying and deceiving others. The past is not amenable to just any telling. As Kerby (1991) points out, “One can not tell any old story without committing some form of injustice to the content of one’s experience.”

Structural Components of Life Stories

A life story that is told by an individual during the course of her lifetime is composed of several discourse units, including narratives, chronicles, explanations, and the connections between them (Linde, 1993). Discourse is defined as spoken or written

text, an integration of sentences with a global meaning that is larger than each of the sentences of which it is comprised (Cortazzi, 1993). Narratives have an important function in life stories because they are a primary means of describing experience and communicating meaning. Narratives are a particular kind of discourse or text. Some authors equate personal narratives with stories and use the terms interchangeably (Polkinghorne, 1988; Mishler, 1986). Others maintain that story is a limited genre, while narrative is an encompassing term (Reissman, 1993). I use the latter distinction, and define narratives in this larger sense, as one form of discourse with consequential events organized around time in a “world” constructed by the narrator. In this context, a subject recounts a past event and reconstructs what happened in order to make a point or to make sense of what happened (Reissman, 1993).

Narration is considered to be a universal human activity. As Gee (1985) points out, “one of the ways— probably the primary way— human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in narrative form.” Narratives describe the setting, characters, dialogue, and plot in an attempt to persuade a listener of the narrator’s point of view. This point of view includes not just the series of events but also the narrator’s interpretation of those events. The use of narratives in life stories not only provides an account of the events of a person’s life, but also emphasizes the sense of meaning that a person gives to those events.

Events in narratives are ordered so that a meaningful sequence is developed. The sequence of the events can provide a basis for inferring causality. Although temporal

order is an important form of sequencing in narratives, there are other forms of sequencing as well. Events, functions, themes, and episodes within the larger text may all be linked causally as well as temporally. Thus thematic sequencing, the ordering of episodes linked by theme not time, is recognized by some analysts (Riessman, 1990).

Narrative Analysis

A Narrative Paradigm

Recent years have seen a rapid growth in narrative studies by scholars in multiple disciplines, including literary criticism, oral history, philosophy, rhetoric, sociology, social work, and psychology. The diversity of this use is reflected in different theoretical orientations, question formulations, and methodologies. Conceptually, narrative analysis is located between literary and social discourse, between written and oral models of communication, and between public and private spheres of interaction (Langellier, 1989). Mishler (1995) has called narrative analysis a “problem-centered” area of inquiry that inherently includes a multiplicity and diversity of approaches. This multiplicity of methodologies has resulted in confusing, sometimes overlapping, definitions of key terms such as narrative and story, therefore definitions of the key concepts and terms used in this study are outlined in the next section.

Labov and Waletzky (1967) proposed a strategy for analyzing personal narratives that examines structural properties of narratives based on their social functions. Labov’s definition of narrative is considered to be a paradigm, a standard against which other models are measured (Langellier, 1989). According to this model, a narrative is defined

as a recapitulation of a past experience in which the respondent seems to relive the experience as she recounts it. The basic structural unit is a narrative clause, a clause in the past tense, temporally ordered with respect to other clauses. These narrative clauses can be distinguished from free clauses which can be rearranged in a narrative sequence without altering the interpretation (Cortazzi, 1993). In this definition, the events in the narrative mirror “the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (Labov, 1967).

Labov’s definition of narrative emphasizes the congruence between the sequence of actual events and narrative events. He believes that changing the sequence of events will change the interpretation of the narrative. For example, using Labov’s definition, a minimal narrative of an accident might consist of two main clauses such as: “he backed into the tree and they yelled at him.” Changing the order or sequence of the two clauses in this narrative changes the meaning of the narrative and the inference of the cause of the accident as told by the narrator.

Labov suggests six structures that make up oral narratives (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972). The first is an abstract, one or two clauses that summarize or encapsulate the whole narrative. Abstracts are optional, but when included they signal the beginning of the narrative with a past tense reference. For example this phrase, “this one time was different, then everything changed,” can introduce a narrative about an incident that precipitated changes.

An orientation provides background context for the narrative and draws a detailed picture of the situation. Orientations typically set the time, the actors, or persons involved. An example of orientation includes this description that sets the context for a narrative: “it was winter, dark, always dark and cold, this night I woke up at 4:00 and he had not come home.” Orientations generally are placed at the beginning of the narrative, but may also occur elsewhere. Orientation clauses that occur later in the narrative frequently serve an evaluative function, that is, they tell what the events of the narrative mean to the narrator (Labov, 1982).

The primary structures of narratives are the complicating action and the evaluative clauses. These provide the main basis for analysis and have been characterized as the “body and soul of the narrative” (Riessman, 1988). The complicating action provides the content, and is the backbone of the narrative. These clauses carry the action and provide the plot of the story. Complicating action clauses not only tell what happened, but the order of these clauses is important in determining causal relationships in the narrative. For example, these phrases tell a minimal narrative of a woman’s response to her husband’s staying out late. “I got up and put on my parka, my warmest boots and began to walk in the dark towards town. I kept going all the way to my sister’s house. I beat on the door until I woke her up. I stayed there that night. He couldn’t find me when he got home.” These phrases outline what happened: the narrator leaves the house because her husband didn’t come home. He comes home and can’t find her there.

If the complicating action tells what happened, the evaluative clauses indicate the point of the narrative and why the speaker recounts this particular narrative. Evaluative devices say to us that this experience was terrifying, dangerous, strange, uncommon. The narrator may describe what other characters did rather than what they said, for example “and he just sat there with his mouth open.” She may offer quotes from a third party that explain or appraise what is happening, i.e., “my best friends kept saying ‘why do you put up with that?’” The narrator may quote herself addressing other characters or may tell what she was thinking at the time: “I just thought, ‘I’m not going to do this anymore.’” Finally the narrator may simply interrupt the narrative and tell the point of the story: “It had happened a lot, but this one time was the last straw. After that I stopped caring.”

Evaluation may also be embedded in the narrative, preserving the continuity of the action. These are lexical, syntactic, or phonological devices (Labov, 1982). These include intensifiers that select an event and strengthen or intensify it. This may be done phonetically, “*whew*,” “*oooooh*.” To indicate their evaluation narrators may compare events that did occur to some that did not occur. These phrases then provide a way of evaluating events by placing them against the backdrop of other events that might have occurred but did not. Finally, evaluation may occur through explanatory clauses marked by “since” and “because.” These may be qualifications or may indicate causal relationships. Therefore as narrators construct their narratives they provide powerful clues for understanding what the events in their lives mean through a variety of evaluative devices (Linde, 1993). Evaluative clauses are key to the presentation of the self. They

form the basis for the claim: "I am a good person, I did what any good person would do in this situation, or I did as much as I could do when blocked by circumstances such as these" (Polanyi, 1989).

Two structures may summarize and close narratives. Resolutions describe the result or resolution of the action. For example, "so I guess I put an end to it myself, by what I did," resolves the story. Narratives may also be summarized by the coda. Although codas are less frequently found than other parts of the narrative, they have several functions. First, they signal that the narrative is ended and close off the sequence of complicating actions. If complicating actions forestall the listener's question "what happened next, what happened then," codas respond, "that was that, nothing else happened." Codas may also contain observations or show the effects of the events on the narrator. Finally, codas bridge the gap between the time at the end of the narrative proper and the present, bringing the narrator and the listener back to the point at which they entered the narrative. "Now things are different," closes off the preceding story. In general conversation narratives may be clearly marked by abstracts and codas. Because life stories are told in a continuous fashion, however, narratives may be strung together without these markers.

Labov's definition of narrative and strategy of analysis has strengths and limitations that have been widely articulated and that have implications for its use (Mishler, 1986, 1995; Langellier, 1989). By defining narratives in terms of a recapitulation of events, primacy is given to those events as well as to a specifically

Western view of temporality. This definition also excludes habitual, present, or future events.

Mishler has used Halliday's (1973) theory of grammar to examine methods of narrative analysis (1986). This theory provides a theoretical framework that specifies the presuppositions and rules that people use in speaking to each other. In this theory language is viewed as a symbolic organization of the self, the world and social relations, and three functions of language are defined: textual, ideational, and interpersonal. Textual refers to the ways that the parts of the text are connected. Ideational or referential refers to the content, how the speakers experience the real world, including their own way of looking at things. Interpersonal refers to the role relationships of the speaker and listener, how meanings are shaped by the interactions between the two, how language forms and maintains social relationships. According to this theory, Labov's definition of narrative stresses the referential function because it assumes congruence between the sequence of actual events and the sequence of narrative events.

By emphasizing the referential function of grammar, Labov's model also implies that reality precedes the narrative and that both language and narrative represent reality, i.e., stories mirror actual events. Others have challenged this view. For example, Linde (1993) points out that narrative is concerned with personal experience. While narratives may be understood as a representation of that experience, equally important are the meanings that the events have to the speaker and the ways in which the meanings are communicated.

Another view of narrative stresses the interpersonal function of speech and grammar, i.e., relationships of the speaker and listener. Narrative is defined as a verbal act performed in response to multiple interacting sets of conditions. These conditions include the context of the setting, cultural and social factors, and the nature of the relationship between narrator and listener. It also includes the psychological motivation of the narrator in telling the tale, as well as all the particular interests, desires, expectations, memories, knowledge, and prior experiences of the participants. Narrative then, is a function all of these conditions, and is not just a representation of a specific, discrete object or event. From this perspective, the elements that make up narratives are general and imprecise recollections, possibly inconsistent pieces of verbal information and various auditory, visual and kinesthetic images that are more or less in focus. The organization and integration of these elements are achieved through the process of narration, in which story sequencing is not necessarily a mirror of chronological sequencing. In this context the expectation of correspondence of chronological sequence and story sequence does not arise. The definition of narrative becomes, in the most minimal sense, a verbal act consisting of someone telling someone else that something happened (Herrnstein-Smith, 1981).

Although Labov's definition of narrative stresses the referential function of speech, i.e., the narrator's experience of the actual world, his emphasis on evaluative devices offers a means of examining the narrator's sense of understanding and meaning of her world. In my study I have chosen to de-emphasize the referential aspect of Labov's

definition of narrative, i.e., the congruence between the sequence of actual and narrative events. Instead I view life stories and narratives as constructions of the past and the present that are interpersonally determined. As Herrnstein-Smith points out, context of the setting, cultural and social factors, and the nature of my relationship with each of the women influences how and what she tells. At the same time I propose to use Labov's definitions of the parts of narrative as a means to examine the narrator's construction of events in her life and her evaluation of those events.

Genres of Narrative

Although Labov's definition of a narrative is considered paradigmatic, others have subsequently defined different forms or genres of narrative that expand the narrowness of Labov's definition (Langellier, 1989). For example, four such genres of narratives have been distinguished on the basis of codes of speech that include verb tense, temporality, sequencing, discourse markers, and other linguistic elements (Riessman, 1990). These genres include stories, episodes, habitual, and hypothetical narratives.

Stories are the classic genre. They recount specific events in a specific past-time so that the listener will believe they actually happened. This form of narrative is told to convince, and pulls the listener into a kind of "inter-subjective agreement to how things were" by the specificity of detail (Riessman, 1990). Thus stories generally include enough detail to convince the listener that these events happened "this way." Stories require protagonists, inciting conditions, culminating events, and make a point, often a moral one. They answer the question "what happened then, what happened next" (Polanyi,

1985). This definition of story closely parallels the definition of narrative proposed by Labov (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972).

Episodes have also been described as a unit of discourse, marked at beginning and end with some kind of thematic unity. They may be marked by pauses and hesitation phenomena, indications of changes of time or participants. Episodes generally have a global event, specific participants, and time and place coordinates (Van Dijk, 1981). Events are stitched together by themes rather than by time, making a general point. Because the thematic connection is implicit, themes must be inferred by the listener (Reissman, 1990). Since episodes are not dependent on temporal sequencing, they may switch forwards or backwards in time. For example, one woman in this study told several episodes of marital discord.

Habitual narratives describe the general course of events over time (Reissman, 1991). They are distinguished by the conditional past tense (“if” or “would”). Although temporally organized, events in habitual narratives are not unique to a particular moment in time but instead stand for classes of events that happen over time, rather than happen at a specific time. For example, the following is a brief habitual narrative version of the previous story. “He would stay out late, and I would just wait at home, I couldn’t sleep and working the next day was always hard.” This example does not recount specific events, but rather a generalized version of many repetitive events indicated by the use of the words “would” or “always.”

Hypothetical narratives, indicated by the subjunctive tense, present a vision of how things might have been, offering a strong contrast to what was (Riessman, 1991).

The following narrative is hypothetical and expresses the narrator's account of events that she wanted to happen. "I wished he would come home, you know, by 8:00 or 9:00 o'clock, we could eat dinner together, maybe listen to music or even just read."

Although Labov's definition of structural components of narrative were developed for stories, I have applied those structures to other genres of narrative as well. For example, in habitual narratives, the complicating action is not a specific past tense clause, but rather a generalized past tense event that stands for a class of similar events. Delineating evaluative and event clauses in all of the genres of narrative lends clues to understanding which events women convey as important in their lives and how they construct meaning in those events. Applied within subjects, these structures offer a means to compare and contrast the way that women organize their experience and construct meaning out of that experience.

Explanations

Explanations are another important unit of discourse in the analysis of life stories. Linde (1993) distinguishes the explanation as a linguistic form. It includes a statement or proposition that is to be proved, and a sequence of statements or reasons why the proposition should be believed, using markers such as "because" or "so." Speakers use this form of explanation to establish the truth of propositions about which they feel uncomfortable or to defend propositions whose validity they feel has been challenged

(Linde, 1993). Although Linde maintains that the proposition occurs first in the explanation, in this study women often place it near the middle or at the end of the explanation. The following explanation shows the proposition placed at the end.

1	50		So I think it all makes sense somehow
2	50		when I look back at what was happening
3	50		I needed to tell him
4	51		that it was hard for me to keep up at work
5	51		it wasn't until I did something about it
6	52		really did something
7	52		but before that,
8	53	proposition	I didn't tell him that what he did was unacceptable to me
9	53		and he kept doing it.

As Bennett (1986) points out, entire stories may function as a form of explanation, particularly when embedded in extended expositions to which they were related. When used as explanations, narratives explain, justify, persuade, or convince. Expository narratives may be distinguished by a long orientation, for "a story as exposition needs to be both understood and believed" and may also be heavily evaluative (Bennett, 1986). For experience that is difficult and controversial, narrative explanations not only reveal a person's rationale for her experience but may also function as a means of guarding the life story from criticism. In life stories where the narrator is explaining her life events in an extended fashion, all of the narrative genres may in some way serve an explanatory function. However, explanations as Linde (1993) has defined them are easily distinguished from narratives by the lack of action and evaluative clauses and by the presence of the proposition.

Chronicles

Finally, life stories may contain a form of discourse known as the chronicle.

Chronicles are accounts of sequences of events that do not contain a unifying evaluative point (Linde, 1993). Chronicles generally occur when the speaker is providing temporally organized information that is unknown to the listener. Chronicles provide valuable information for understanding the course of a life, but do not provide the speaker's sense of meaning or evaluation of that information. Although they may contain many complicating action clauses, and even a few orientation clauses, chronicles are distinguished by the lack of evaluation clauses. For example, the following clauses make up a chronicle. Information is conveyed about how a woman meets a man, but the emotional meaning of their relationship is absent.

1	33	OR	We met on a train
2	33	CA	I was traveling east
3	33	OR	on my way to school
4	34	CA	he sat with me at dinner
5	34	CA	then breakfast
6	34	CA	then lunch
7	35	OR	before I realized it
8	35	CA	I agreed to go with him to Boston
9	35	CA	I called my brother from the depot
10	36	CA	I told him I was taking a detour
11	36	OR	it lasted 14 years

In summary, life stories are made up of various genres of narratives, explanations and chronicles, and the connections between them. Although Labov and Waletzky (1967) defined their six structures within the story genre, I have applied those structures to habitual and hypothetical narratives as well. These forms of narratives do not contain the specific complicating action clauses that match the specific events that occurred in real

life. Instead of specific events, habitual and hypothetical narratives contain generalized or potential events. I have distinguished the structures for all the forms of narratives because they offer clear clues to the woman's sense of meaning of the events that she outlines to me.

Inductive analytic coding

Narrative analysis provides an excellent means to examine the construction of individual lives and meaning systems, to examine the way that life stories are told, and to compare both meaning constructions and ways of telling. It is a way of looking within individual lives. However, I am also interested in examining the abuse that women describe and the ways that they have coped with that abuse. Therefore I have examined the abuse, the effects of the abuse, and coping strategies for the abuse across individual women's lives. To do this I used a form of analytic inductive coding to generate concepts for each substantive topic. This form of analysis is similar to the approach outlined in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 1990).

Analytic inductive coding is a process of conceptualizing, categorizing, and sorting the data, by asking "what is going on here or what does it mean?" In the first step, conceptual labels that tell what this is an instance of are placed on the verbal expressions of experience. For example: "feeling blue" is one aspect of dysphoria, "feeling stupid" is an example of low self-esteem. Coding fractures the data, breaking it up into analytic "chunks," or conceptual labels. Coding may be done by line or by sentence. I used "meaning chunks." That is, I coded segments of the interviews that I determined to

express a particular concept within the context of the study. The idea units ranged in length from several sentences to several words. For example, one of the women in this study said “Now see I can do it geographically, that gives you connections.” I used the conceptual label, ‘organize experience by place’ for this segment. The labels constructed in this process are provisional, because coding is a highly iterative process in which each coded segment of the data is compared to other segments (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). After this initial coding, I regrouped the conceptual labels into similar ideas or concepts. For instance, the conceptual label ‘organize experience by place’ became part of a larger, more abstract category, ‘constructing the life story.’

In the second step of coding, described as axial coding, emerging concepts were examined closely to determine their parameters or dimensions (Charmaz, 1990). The concepts were examined again by asking questions, such as “under what conditions did these phenomena occur” and “what were the consequences of these phenomena?” For example, endurance was a category that was made up of several conceptual labels, such as perseverance, silence, and faith. To understand this category more thoroughly, I asked under what conditions did endurance occur, why did women endure the abuse, what were the consequences of endurance? This step results in putting the data back together in new ways, explicating the connections and relationships between the concepts that have been constructed. Analytic inductive coding then was used to examine the effects of the abuse and concepts of coping with it across individual lives

Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

I have emphasized throughout this chapter that this study falls within the interpretive or constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1995). From this perspective validity is the process of making claims for the trustworthiness or plausibility of the interpretation. Validation includes concepts of transparency, persuasiveness, correspondence, and communicability of the narratives (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Riessman, 1993). Transparency depends on the extent to which the reader can see the basic processes of data collection. Records of transcripts, interview context, and other processes allow readers to judge for themselves whether the data represented in the analysis depict the whole of the collected data. Plausibility refers to whether claims are supported with evidence from informants' accounts. It also depends on the extent to which alternative interpretations of the data are considered. Coherence refers to the narrators' goals including justification of an event or position, the structural means that are used to accomplish that goal, and the overall strength of the themes of the narrative (Agar & Hobbs, 1982). For this research, transparency, plausibility, and coherence have been determined by me, with checks by committee members. Correspondence refers to the extent of agreement between the participants and the researcher on the interpretation of the data. Although it was the goal to contact women in the study and ascertain their response to the interpretation, the participants' mobility and my time constraints prevented this step.

Traditional notions of reliability do not apply to the interpretive paradigm (Riessman, 1993) because replication is not considered to be a goal. Not only would the

interviews take a different course with another investigator asking the questions, but the analysis could differ depending on the background and belief system of the investigator. As emphasized throughout this chapter, multiple interpretations of these data are possible.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. The study has been limited by the time constraints of being a doctoral student. I have conducted this study with little funding. This factor has limited the time to recruit and interview volunteers as well as to analyze additional information. Although this is an exploratory study designed to raise questions about the experience of older women sexually abused as children, stories from additional subjects certainly could have broadened the findings.

Sample bias is a potential problem for this study because of the sensitivity of topic. Women who have not resolved effects of the abuse may have been reluctant to discuss it. This is a difficult but not uncommon issue for studies with survivors of sexual abuse (Russell, 1986; Finkelhor et al., 1990). However, as mentioned previously more than one woman in the study is still struggling with the effects of the abuse. Several women in this study were referred by a therapist. It is possible these women found it easier to talk about their life story than women not in therapy. Several women in the study are members of Crone, an activist organization of older women. These women might be more likely to speak out on sensitive issues like child sexual abuse than non-members. All of the respondents in the study are white women. Their stories are not meant to be

representative of other racial or cultural groups. In short, this is a purposeful sample, but not necessarily a representative one, and generalizability is restricted. Whether any findings, interpretive or positivist, particularly those based on such a small sample, generalize across age, gender, culture, and status is questionable. It is the intent of this study to explore the meaning that older women sexually abused as children have found in their lives. These findings may suggest questions for other studies, and may inform those working with both younger and older women who may have been sexually abused as children.

Narrative analysis lends itself to the exploration of the experience and meaning that people construct for their lives. I have emphasized throughout this chapter that the stories are constructions that change as awareness changes. However, to examine the stories and look closely at the words that people choose at a particular time is to reify what they say, to make the claim that this is the “truth” of their lives. I would again emphasize my belief that life stories are constructed in accordance with awareness and interpersonal influences. The stories told here represent the woman’s perceptions of the events in her life and her construction of them to me at one particular time.

I have outlined the limitations and strengths of Labov’s definition of narrative structures and emphasized that this is just one method of narrative analysis. By choosing this method of narrative analysis, I do not mean to imply that other methods would not be as appropriate nor that this is the best method of analysis. Because of the limits of student

status and time constraints I have not attempted to learn some of these other methods, but intend to do so in future studies.

Women in this study have told their stories with courage, in spite of discomfort and tears. My time constraints not only limited the scope of the study, but limited my ability to involve the participants in the analytic process as well. Although I would have preferred to make the analysis an interpersonal one, giving the results back to the participants for their comments, and then incorporating those comments in the analysis, my need to finish in a timely fashion precluded this step.

I have struggled to find a method of analysis that respects the life stories of the women in this study and that does not violate their experience in the analytic process. Although narrative analysis privileges the stories that these women have told and preserves their ways of telling, reconstruction and analysis inherently privileges my voice as well. It is my intent to lay bare as much as possible the analytic process, so that readers can decide for themselves the plausibility of my claims.

Summary

In summary, data for this study were collected in the form of life stories which consist of various kinds of discourse units. Life stories represent the way that people organize and understand the events in their lives and provide clues to the meanings that they make of the events. Life stories not only change as people age, but they are interpersonally constructed and contextually determined. Thus they were used as the

primary means of collecting data, providing an appropriate means to examine the experience of older women sexually abused as children.

Life stories consist of various discourse units, including narratives. Analysis within individual life stories is achieved through examination of those units. Narrative structures, defined by Labov and Waletzky (1967) are applied to both stories and other genres of narrative.

I have combined two methods of analysis for this study. I have used a form of narrative analysis as well as inductive analytic coding. Analytic coding allows for a thorough examination of the data and the construction of conceptual ideas that transcend individual lives. Because this process is done inductively, the concepts that are constructed are grounded in the data. However, this coding process fractures individual's stories and the individual's sense of meaning that is based on how stories are told is lost. This problem is resolved by the use of narrative analysis, which preserves the way that the women in this study have told their stories and the way that they have made sense of their experience. Combining narrative analysis and analytic coding builds on the strength of each process. The power of the overall analysis is increased by this combination of methods.

Although the traditional concepts of validity and reliability do not apply to an interpretive study, other concepts provide a means to evaluate the quality of the data gathering and analysis. Thus concepts of transparency, plausibility, and coherence offer a means by which to judge the quality of this study. It is hoped that this study will reflect

the courage and honesty of the women who have volunteered to tell stories that “they have tended” all of their lives.

Chapter 3
A Triptych of Lives
Alice: A Story of Survival and Endurance

Introduction

Alice, age 75, was widowed 13 years ago, and now lives independently. Although she begins her life story in her childhood and ends it in the present, she does not organize her story by year or even by decade. She seldom uses specific time markers, such as the year or her age, instead she tells her life story as a sequence of global episodes that enclose large time periods of her life. The themes of the four episodes are the sexual abuse that occurs in childhood; her primary relationships of early and middle adulthood; her role as wife, including caring for her husband during early old age; and her struggles to cope with her own precarious health in old age. Depression, which Alice describes as “a weight hanging over me” or “a heavy rock,” is a refrain that she repeats throughout these episodes.

Episode One

The theme of the first episode is childhood sexual abuse. Alice describes three separate incidents of sexual abuse that began when she was two or three and that ended when she was 13 or 14. She begins with this habitual narrative of abuse by an uncle.

1	2	OR	<i>well</i> uh I was born and raised on a farm uh in eastern uh
	2		Virginia
2	2	OR	and we were a large family
3	2	OR	I was the oldest uh
4	3	OR	well there's 8 living
5	3	OR	but I was the oldest of 12
6	3	OR	and when I was oh like I think about 10 years old
7	4	OR	my father's brother came to live with us
8	4	OR	and he was 16

9	4	CA	and so he um started
10	5	OR	I don't know exactly how it started but anyhow
11	5	CA	he said he wanted to teach me how to have sex
12	6	CA	and um so as long as I was at home on the ranch
13	6	CA	why he had his sex
14	7	CA	and and he would give me the high sign or something
15	7	CA	and I would go and
16	7	CA	and then um I went into high school
17	8	OR	but this sex business lasted about 4 years I'd say 3 or 4
	8		years
18	8	OR	and um he acted like he was my sweetheart
19	9	EV	but uh you know it wasn't obvious
20	9	EV	or else my folks were blind [um hmm]

Alice begins her narrative by locating her family, where they lived, how many children there were, and how the abuse began. An uncle, 6 years older, came to live with her family. She repeats his reasons to describe how the abuse, which lasted 3 or 4 years, began. Alice uses a genre of narrative that implies that the abuse was a recurring event. So long as she was "at home on the ranch," he would signal her and she would comply.

Alice tells this story with little emotional evaluation, she does not state directly what this relationship meant or how it affected her. Instead, she indicates her confusion and ambivalence about it. She does not overtly describe this relationship as abusive, but instead implies covertly that this relationship was exploitive. For example, she uses his words, "teach her about sex," to describe how she began having sex with her uncle. This is an offer that a ten year old might see as innocent and generous. She hints at the power difference between them: she was the student, he was the teacher. He was 16, she was still a child. She was most likely, at age 10, still prepubertal. "He had his sex," she says, suggesting that this was something for him, not for her. She describes the abuse as "this

sex business,” a terse, harsh description. Her uncle “acted as if” he was her sweetheart, she says. These words imply pretense, and she communicates to me that she knew she was not really his sweetheart. She also suggests that the abuse lasted so long because the sexual nature of their relationship was not obvious. In the last line, however, she hints that her parents ignored the abuse. They were blind not to see what was happening.

Alice then told the following story:

1	9	OR	and then also one time we went swimming
2	10	OR	we had a big pond that they built
3	10	OR	and we used to go swimming
4	11	OR	and my father took us swimming one Sunday afternoon
5	11	CA	and <i>he</i> came and rubbed against me
6	12	OR	and with if uh if the other kids hadn't been around
7	12	OR	why he'd a probably molested me too.
8	13	CA	and then he says “don't tell momma”
9	13	EV	but from that time on I was afraid of <i>him</i> .

Alice uses a different form of narrative to describe this incident. She uses a story, a form of narrative that preserves the drama of the storyworld by recreating a particular situation. This form of narrative pulls the listener into a kind of “inter-subjective agreement to how things were” by depicting specific events (Riessman, 1990). Alice describes a seemingly innocent event: her father took the children for a Sunday swim in a pond that he had built for them. Then he came and rubbed against her, she says in a sexual way. His intent was to molest her, she claims, and only the presence of the other children stopped him. Alice imputes words to her father using a quotation to strengthen her claim that he knew that what he had done was wrong. She states with certainty what this incident meant to her, it destroyed her trust, “from that time on, I was afraid of *him*.”

Much later in the interview (indicated by the line numbers of the transcript), she tells another story of sexual abuse that occurred when she was very young.

1	269	OR	when I was probably 2 or 3 years old
2	270	OR	my mother had a cousin
3	270	OR	and they lived oh a little ways from us
4	270	OR	and he was over there one night
5	271	OR	and he we had root cellars you know what they are
	271		[um hmm, sure]
6	271	OR	well we had a little one that was they dug down
7	272	OR	and then into the hill
8	272	OR	and uh it wasn't very big
9	272	CA	well <i>he</i> took me one night
10	273	OR	he had a chair up there
11	273	OR	I don't know how come he when he did that
12	273	OR	but I remember there was a chair
13	274	CA	and he sat on the chair
14	274	CA	and he put me a straddle on his on his lap
15	274	CA	and then tried to put that big thing in me
16	275	EV	and I can remember it as plain today as when it happened
17	277	EV	it probably brought on a great fear and uh apprehension
18	278	EV	that lasted all my life
19	278	EV	cause that was the beginning
20	278	CA	and then my mother called me
21	279	OR	and and when I went to the house
22	279	OR	then I don't know what they did
23	279	OR	they didn't do it in <i>my</i> presence
24	280	OR	but he never came back (4)
25	280	OR	and he was a tall guy
26	280	OR	and he was really stooped shoulders you know
27	281	R	so that part is the beginning and the worst
28	281	R	and I think the rest of these things just followed
29	282	R	and fell into place you know as part of that [umm hmm]
30	282	CO	but it's it's those things have always been on my mind

Alice recounts this incident of sexual abuse in response to my question of how the experience of child sexual abuse has affected her life. She attempts to convince me of the truth of this memory with line 16, she can still remember the incident, more than 70 years

later. She again constructs the incident in story form, a genre of narrative that provides convincing detail as if to establish the truth of the past by the completeness of the description. Alice draws a distinct picture of the incident by including her age, the place, and the actors. She declares that this incident brought about a state of fear and apprehension that lasted all of her life. Alice suggests that her parents realized what had happened and banished the man from the house, although she did not hear them talk to this cousin. However, he did not come to their house again. With the resolution she links this story to the previous narratives, this first incident was the worst, and it set the stage for what followed, the other incidents fell into place as if fated. She finishes this story and returns to the present, pulling the thread of these experiences from the past to the present: it has always been on her mind.

Alice offers an explanation of what these incidents meant to her.

1	13	proposition	And it always bothered me you know that as a child here
	14		was sex always knocking on my door.
2	14		And yet they made such a thing of of that sex was sin
	15		and all that
3	15		and my folks were very religious
4	15		and so they'd say this is sin or that's sin or something
	16		else.
5	16		They pounded it into me <i>anyway</i> so much that sex was
	16		sin,
6	17		so uh when I got a little older and started going with
	17		people you know
7	17		uh I wasn't molested as I know from any other people I
	18		went with um
8	18	proposition	but it always bothered me that they made such a thing of
	18		weddings you know
9	19		people went together
10	19		and then they had weddings
11	19		and it was so beautiful and everything
12	20		and then you're right back in the same track

20 [uh hmm what do you mean, you're right back in the
 21 track?]
 13 21 well, *sex*.
 14 21 And sex was something that I it just uh I I abhorred it
 15 22 and it was like a snake wrapped around me or something
 16 22 and you can't break *free*
 17 23 and then for for them to have great big weddings
 18 23 and it was so *great*
 19 23 and make congratulated people and you know
 20 24 and then they go right to the bed and have sex

Alice makes two points with this explanation. First, she was just a child and yet sex was pervasive, it was "always" there. Without hesitation she declares that the sexual advances of her uncle and father during her childhood were abusive, they "bothered her." Secondly, she attributes her confusion about sexual relations to her parents' religious beliefs and values. Her parents were "very" religious, she says, and emphasized that sex was sinful. They "pounded" this belief into her. At the same time, her parents celebrated weddings as beautiful and joyous. This portrayal of sex as sinful along with the celebration of a ritual that condoned sex represented a conflict that Alice could not reconcile. She abhorred sex and felt unable to break free from it. She describes sex as a snake, a Christian symbol of evil and betrayal, and a phallic symbol as well, something that enclosed her from which she could not escape. She closes the explanation reiterating the hypocrisy: her parents congratulated married couples even though they would then immediately have sex.

In this episode Alice describes her childhood as a series of sexual abusive incidents that included sexual gestures by her father. She claims confusion that resulted from her parents' values towards sex and marriage. Although her parents taught her that

sex was sinful, they celebrated marriage, even though the couple would then “go right to bed and have sex.” Alice closes this first episode with a brief story of her first marriage. This story bridges the theme of this episode, sexual abuse and her confusion about sexual relations with the theme of the next episode, the establishment of primary relationships in her adult life.

She tells this story:

1	24	CA	and I got married and uh once
2	25	CA	and and my husband wouldn't have sex
3	25	OR	he said he <i>couldn't</i> have sex
4	25	OR	but he <i>wouldn't</i> have sex.
5	26	OR	He and his brother had
6	26	OR	uh they were twins I guess
7	26	OR	and they had just more or less used each other
8	27	OR	and weren't interested in women or anything.
9	27	CA	And so um he he didn't pay any attention to me
10	28	EV	and it was it was no life
11	28	CA	I mean I'd he took me to a trailer in Chicago
12	28	OR	that it was raining
13	28	OR	and it leaked all over
14	29	OR	and it was just a small place
15	29	OR	and after a week
16	29	CA	I told him to take me to the train
17	30	R	I was going home

Alice has said that after marriage couples “go right to the bed and have sex.” Yet when she got married, her husband refused to have sex. He paid her no attention and took her to a trailer in Chicago. After a week she told him to take her to the train, she was going home. She provides context for this brief, failed marriage in the orientation clauses. Although her husband said he could not have sex, implying a lack of choice, she believes that he would not have sex, an act of will. She offers her reason for his impotence, his

involvement with his twin brother precluded interest in women. The honeymoon was a leaky small trailer, and the groom ignored her sexually. “This was no life,” she said. This story is a snapshot, not a detailed portrait with extensive elaboration. It provides the bare details of her first marriage, a story of neglect. Alice exhibits through her language in this story both acquiescence and agency. Her husband “took” her to the trailer, she says, suggesting that he was in control. The conditions: the leaking trailer, his willful impotence, and his neglect define the situation, there is little direct evaluation. At the same time, Alice exhibits her self determination by depicting herself taking matters into her own hands and ending the marriage by leaving.

Episode Two

In the next episode of her life, Alice recounts the establishment of the primary relationships in her life, including a second marriage to this first husband, a relationship with a woman, and marriage to a second husband. This episode spans the time from early adulthood to her late 30's. She begins by saying that after finishing high school she went to bible college, graduated, and pastored some churches.

She then told another story of her second marriage to her first husband.

1	32	OR	and um I was in Maryland
2	32	OR	when I met the first man I married
3	32	OR	and he'd come to church
4	33	OR	and and also after I married him um
5	33	CA	<i>I married</i> him twice
6	33	EV	because I thought I'd been hasty the first time
7	34	CA	he did his business at 3 o'clock in the morning
8	34	CA	and shot all over me
9	34	EV	and I was so mad
10	35	CA	so I told him to be gone before dark
11	35	CO	and he then come to find out he'd been goosing all the

35 CO girls at the church

Here she provides more context for her relationship with this first husband. She locates this story saying that she met him in church. She explains that she gave him a second chance, married him a second time. Again his sexual failure precipitates her decision to end the marriage, and she orders him out of her life. There are few evaluative phrases in this story, i.e., Alice does not say directly what this marriage and its failure meant to her. She must have cared for this man because she married him a second time. However, she relates only her anger at his sexual failure. In the last line she asks an unspoken question, “what kind of man is this?” Then she answers the question, he is the kind of man who makes sexual advances to women he met at church. She closes the story with a coda that implies his lack of moral character. Thus she conveys, albeit indirectly, her judgment of her husband and the soundness of her decision to be rid of him.

Alice then gives an account, a chronicle of her relationship with a woman, a relationship that lasted approximately 12 years.

1	36	OR	after <i>he</i> was gone
2	36	CA	I was with another lady
3	37	CA	and we were pastoring this church
4	37	OR	and then um we went to southern Illinois
5	37	CA	and started another church
6	38	OR	and during that time it was a long story but we uh she'd had
7	38	CA	we kept children for the state
8	38	CA	and they were placed in other homes
9	39	CA	and um so then after we got she adopted a boy,
	39		one of the boys
10	40	CA	and so we thought it was best for him that we move out
	40		of the state because his father was there, stepfather
11	41	CA	and so we moved back up to Virginia to the City
12	41	CA	and we I worked in a hospital

13	42	CA	and she worked in a nursing home
14	42	CA	and then we started a nursing home of our own [um hm]
15	43	OR	and we did that for about 6 years
16	43	CA	and we had a bigger bui..., bought a bigger building
17	44	CA	and we had 16 patients or clients
18	44	CA	and then um she got married

Alice describes her relationship with this woman and the dozen or so years they were together with a very particular discourse form, the chronicle. As mentioned in Chapter 2, chronicles generally occur when the speaker is providing temporally organized information that is unknown to the listener. Although chronicles provide information necessary for understanding a life story, they do not provide the speaker's sense of meaning or evaluation of that information. In this particular chronicle there is some ambiguity about the nature of the relationship between these two women. On one hand Alice begins by saying that she was "with" another lady. This could mean that she was "sexually with" her, or that they were together in the sense of shared experiences. She then recounts a number of the employment related things that they did together over the course of several years. They pastored churches, kept foster children, worked in hospitals and nursing homes, and started and ran a nursing home of their own. Alice chooses a discourse form that includes no evaluation, thus we do not know what this relationship meant to her. She ends the chronicle abruptly with her partner's marriage, a surprising detail if the relationship was a sexual one.

Alice continues this episode with a story of her marriage to her second husband that begins with "and so then I started going with my second husband." In these two lines then she describes her partner's marriage and her own subsequent relationship with a man

that she will eventually marry. The words “and so then I started” imply that the two events, her partner’s marriage and her development of a relationship with her future husband, are causally connected. She also describes in a non-narrative section, the breakdown of her partnership with this woman. After her partner married, Alice began going with a man. She says that this woman “was so jealous, she could have a boyfriend, but I couldn’t go anyplace.” Her partner accused Alice of theft, a charge that she refutes. Alice became increasingly depressed. Finally, she and her partner dissolved their business. She offers no other information about this relationship except that over the years she continued to maintain contact with the adopted son, the boy that “I helped to raise.” Alice chooses a form of discourse that provides information but that does not give any sense of evaluation. She closes her emotional involvement with this woman in a cloak of ambiguity. Thus Alice accomplishes with this narrative form two objectives: she recounts a primary relationship in her life and accounts for several years of her life, but she does not reveal information that is a potential source of shame or discomfort.

Alice ends this episode with an account of her marriage to her second husband. She begins:

1	44	CA	and so then I started going with my second husband
2	45	OR	and he worked for the railroad,
3	45	OR	he was a very small man 4’10”
4	45	OR	and he’d never married
5	46	OR	and (p) did all the women but um
6	46	CA	and I did have sex with him uh
7	47	EV	but I don’t know I felt um as time went on I felt more and
	47		more uh depressed
8	47	EV	I didn’t know what it was at the time..
	48	EV	but thin..., nothing looked good

After her partner married, Alice began going with her second husband. She indicates that this relationship is different from her first marriage because she had sex with this man. As time went on, she says, she became more and more depressed. She continues this story:

1	57	OR	but um I went with him for a long time
2	58	OR	and he was uh as old as my Dad,
3	58	OR	but he was fun and he was very active and everything
4	59	OR	and and <i>age</i> was no problem with us
5	59	CA	and so finally I told him I said "I've given you everything
	60		that I have"
6	60	CA	and I said "I want to get married"
7	60	OR	well he had some other lady on the string too
8	61	CA	and he said "I to have to talk to her first"
9	61	CA	and I said "OK, but you talk to her"
10	62	OR	well she had somebody too so she said OK.
11	62	EV	and I know he didn't want to get married
12	62	CA	but I insisted you know
13	63	CA	so we we went to on a trip
14	63	CA	and we got married in the city
15	63	R	and then we went on.
16	64	CO	But um all all my life there's been a heavy weight
	64	C)	hanging over me

She dated this man for a long time. He was as old as her father, but that was no problem she claims, because he was active and fun. She was clearly the agent in initiating the marriage. She decided that she wanted to be married and told him "I've given you everything that I have." Alice mentions casually in line 7 that he was unfaithful: he had to check with his mistress before he could marry Alice. She passes no judgment on him however, except to say that she knew he did not want to marry her. She was determined and insisted that they marry. Although she is the agent in initiating the marriage, he is the agent in the relationship. She has given him everything she has even though he has been

unfaithful. She ends the story and closes off this episode by describing the depression in a coda that reverberates temporally from the past into the next episode.

Episode Three

The third episode of Alice's story spans about 25 years, beginning just after her marriage and continuing through her husband's death. The theme is Alice's role as wife, particularly the role she assumed as caregiver during her husband's final illness. She connects this episode to the last with a the coda that becomes a refrain that she repeats throughout her life story, she was depressed, all of her life there was a heavy weight hanging over her. She explains:

1	64		But um all all my life there's been a heavy weight
	64		hanging over me
2	64		and you get to the place where um
3	65	proposition	well I was busy, I kept busy
4	65		we pastored churches
5	65		we had the nursing home
6	65		I worked as a telephone operator
7	66		I've <i>always</i> worked
8	66		and I took accounting by correspondence course
9	67		so I could you know have a better job [um hmm]
10	67		and um we moved up there so I had an office in our house
	68		and did bookkeeping
11	68		and and I had a mimeograph
12	68		and put out a little paper

Alice begins by describing again the recurring depression. It was there all of her life. She starts to say what it meant, and breaks off and explains her response to the depression: she kept busy, she worked hard. She recounts the jobs she held through all of her relationships. She exhibits again, agency and determination through grammar, choosing a series of transitive active verbs. "I always worked," she emphasizes. She was

capable, taking advantage of many opportunities. She held many jobs, always trying to do better.

Alice suggests that she was the provider in this marriage, saying, “I couldn’t make enough to live on.” Consequently they moved when she got a job with a federal agency, a job that she held until she retired. Towards the end of this episode her husband’s health failed and she became his primary caregiver. She begins with this story:

1	75	OR	we bought a house in 1974
2	75	OR	and <i>moved</i>
3	75	OR	and after that time we never had sex at all.
4	76	OR	And um towards the end you know
5	76	OR	let’s see he was about 82 or 3
6	76	CA	and we were talking about something
7	77	CA	and uh uh I expressed my opinion
8	77	CA	and he just looked at me with such <i>hate</i> and disregard
9	77	EV	and I <i>know</i>
10	78	OR	then he got sick,
11	78	OR	he got a blood clot in his leg
12	78	OR	and then he got sick
13	78	OR	and he needed me
14	79	OR	but if he hadn’t gotten sick and needed me
15	79	EV	I think he would have left.
16	80	EV	because uh he’d never would have sex anymore
17	80	EV	and and uh things were just different

Alice begins this story by setting the time and circumstances. She then recounts a specific incident, they were talking, she expressed an opinion and he responded with a look of hatred and disregard. She starts to say that she knew something, but breaks off and reorients the story to what happened next: her husband became ill and needed her help. She then returns to the theme of the story, what she had started to say. If he had not been sick and needed her, he would have left her because he would not have sex anymore

and things were just different. Alice communicates through this story her perceptions of her marriage towards the end of her husband's life. Initially she says that they no longer had sex, but then she says that he would not have sex. In this way she suggests that this was a condition for which he was responsible, i.e., he chose not to have sex, he was not impotent. By implication he stayed in the marriage largely because of their sexual relatedness. If he did not want sex from her anymore, there was no other reason he would stay— except that he was too sick to go. She also claims that he no longer cared for her and had no respect for her opinions. He stayed in the marriage, she says, because he became ill and needed her. Things were “different,” she claims, this was no longer a happy marriage.

Alice also offers this story about her husband.

1	80	OR	and I told him about my Dad
2	81	EV	but <i>he</i> was very loose living anyway
3	81	EV	and so I don't think that mattered to him,
4	81	EV	he had many women,
5	82	OR	after we were married
6	82	CA	I found a box about that tall and about that square full of
	82		women's pictures (3) and and
7	83	OR	when he knew I found that
8	83	CA	it disappeared (laughs)
9	83	R	<i>but</i> it told me something.

Alice uses this story to convey to me her perception of her husband's character.

When she told her husband about her father's attempt to molest her, he did not judge her harshly. However, his response did not reflect his sensitivity and concern for her, but rather he, like her father, had questionable morals. She pauses slightly for emphasis (indicated by the comma) and then recounts an incident that illustrates her point. After

their marriage she found a box of pictures of women that he had secretly kept. She pauses again, emphasizing the significance of what she found and assumes that I too, know what this means. She implies that he got rid of the box of pictures when he knew that she had discovered it. She laughs now at this, but says, as she closes the story, that it told her something about her husband.

The point that Alice makes with this story is that her husband was not a good man. He was a “loose living” womanizer who kept pictures of women hidden away. She leaves unanswered what kinds of pictures her husband kept. Were they pornographic, were they pictures of other girlfriends? She does not describe these details, but rather suggests that they were improper, otherwise he would not have needed to either hide them or dispose of them when she found them. Alice does not label her husband or call him names. She does not say directly what kind of man she thought he was. Instead, she draws a picture of her husband that provides incriminating “evidence” and leaves me to draw my own conclusions.

A year and a half after their move, her husband’s health failed. He had blood clots that necessitated removal of most of his large intestine and some of his colon. As a result of that operation, he suffered chronic diarrhea. He also endured several strokes during this time. As his health deteriorated Alice took on the role as his primary caregiver. Eventually she developed a heart condition. Because of her deteriorating health and her husband’s need for constant care, she applied for disability. Her claim was initially denied, but she was determined to reapply and cajoled the doctors to write new letters

supporting her claim. She was finally awarded the claim and was able then to stay home to care for her husband. Alice describes her role as caregiver in the following chronicle:

1	119	OR	And so he was on tons of medicine
2	119	OR	and it was just a full time job
3	119	CA	and I tried to work
4	120	CA	and take care of him
5	120	OR	and it was just a night and day job
6	120	CA	and I got to where my heart was bothering me a lot
7	121	CA	and so I just had to stay home
8	121	CA	and take care of him

Alice repeats the theme of hard work, and portrays her role of caring for her husband as a full time, night and day job. She suggests that she could not do both “jobs,” she could not work outside the home and care for him. She implies that she had little choice, her health began to fail, “and so” she “just had” to stay home and care for him. Alice makes the claim that these circumstances were demanding and all encompassing by presenting the events in a very rhythmic way, each clause beginning with the conjunction and. It is as if she is reading from an endless list, saying “and then this, and then this.” She again uses the chronicle, a discourse unit that provides information, but little direct sense of how these events affected her, what she felt, or what it meant to her. Thus she uses narrative structure and grammar to suggest that circumstances were such that this was all that she could do, she had no choice.

Alice’s husband lived for 3 and 1/2 years, during which time he needed constant care. Alice describes this time as a “hard chapter.” “He kept me busy while he was sick,” she said and provided the following description of how she felt at that time:

103		and and he lived 3 and a half more years
103		but all my life there’s been this heavy rock over my head

104 and then uh when I was younger I used to have a free
 104 spirit
 104 and you know enjoy things
 104 and everything
 105 and then as time went on
 105 it seemed like I just got bound up tighter
 105 you know more restrictions

Again Alice brings up the refrain of recurring depression. It has been there all of her life, this heavy rock and although she enjoyed things when she was younger, as she got older she felt more and more constrained.

She later describes her life caring for her husband in this habitual narrative:

1 390 OR and when I was taking care of him
 2 390 CA I worked out a system um
 3 391 OR he would be real tired you know
 4 391 CA and I'd get him up for breakfast
 5 392 OR and then it would take a couple of hours for him to get
 392 moving
 6 392 OR and get out there and eat his breakfast
 7 392 OR it took him a long time
 8 393 OR and he had to take those pills
 9 393 OR and they wouldn't go down
 10 393 OR so he'd sit there and try to get them down
 11 396 CA so (5) I worked out a system
 12 397 OR where after he had his breakfast
 13 397 CA and I'd get him in bed back in bed
 14 397 OR he'd go to the bathroom and everything
 15 398 OR and then he'd sleep for a couple of hours
 16 398 CA and that's when I went took time to go out of the house
 17 399 EV but that's about the only time I got out
 18 400 CA but then I had to go buy groceries or medicine and do all
 400 the errands (3)
 19 401 EV but it was something to do
 20 401 EV and it was different than staying in the house

This narrative describes Alice's life during her husband's last years. She emphasizes grammatically the repetitiveness of their daily routines, by repeating the

conditional past tense all through the narrative: he would, she would. She outlines one day as if it was every day during this three and a half years. Alice depicts herself as the agent in this narrative. She emphasizes through repetition that she was in control. She worked out a system, it was *her* way of managing. She also makes clear the extent of the care that she provided in a series of subject, active verb clauses. She got him up, she got him back to bed, she did the shopping, got his medicine, and did *all* the errands. The only time she got out of the house, she spent her time taking care of errands. Her whole life during this time, she claims, consisted of caring for him. She draws a picture of a difficult existence and a demanding job. She adds however, that at least it was something to do, and at least she got out of the house. This episode finally ends with her husband's death at home.

Again, Alice does not include much evaluation, she does not tell us directly what this meant to her. Instead she draws a picture, emphasizing the completeness of her caring. We can easily conclude that this was an arduous job, and that it took up all of her life. She does not complain, however. Instead she tells the story with pride as a response to a question about working all of her life.

Episode Four

The last episode of Alice's life story centers on her efforts to put her life together after her husband's death. She begins to cope with recurring depression and health problems that began when she was caring for her husband and that worsened after his death. She describes her response to his death in this story:

1 155 OR and then after he was gone um

2	155	EV	I can't explain the feeling
3	156	OR	but when I walked in the house after everybody was gone
4	156	OR	and another thing I have there's 8 of us kids
5	157	OR	one brother came to the funeral and my mother
6	157	OR	and um so after everybody had gone
7	158	CA	and I walked in the house
8	158	CA	and walked around
9	158	EV	I thought " <i>what</i> am I doing with <i>this</i> , you know"
10	159	EV	but then I knew I had to start putting things together
11	159	EV	again and start to live
12	159	OR	and we had friends that are missionaries in Brazil
13	160	OR	so they had been the year before when he was really bad
14	161	CA	and I said "I'd sure like to come to Brazil"
15	161	EV	and that was the one thing that kept me going
16	162	EV	when he's gone I was going to go to Brazil [um hmm]

It is difficult to explain how she feels, she says, but then she tells a story that makes several points. She draws a picture of walking into her house, wondering what she is going to do. She interrupts this picture and says that although she has many brothers and sisters, only one sibling came to the funeral. She constructs a picture of herself alone, without support from her family during a difficult time. She returns to the story, the picture of an empty house, an empty life and her uncertainty at what to do. She says then that she knew she had to put something together. She kept herself going during her husband's illness by promising herself something, something exotic, something different, a trip to Brazil. She implies that this was a two-part process, she had to do something for herself, and she knew that she had to do it. With this narrative form then, Alice tells what she "can't explain." She was alone after her husband died, with little family support. Although she was uncertain about what to do, she knew that she must take care of herself, she must put her life back together.

Alice did indeed go to Brazil and although it was “nice to go to Brazil,” she developed congestive heart failure, a consequence of atrial fibrillation. She explained her condition in this way:

1	177	proposition	but then I started a same trail <i>he'd</i> been
2	177		taking all of the medication
3	177		and I still take gobs
4	178		and and this being sick
5	178		or knowing that things were going haywire
6	178		and <i>I</i> was taking medicine where he left off
7	179		and some of the same medicine

Within months of her husband’s death, Alice experienced many of the same health problems that her husband had. She takes “gobs” of medicine, many of the same drugs he took. She is on the same “trail” that her husband took, and she has told me where that “trail” ended.

During this same time Alice experienced the recurrent depression that she has described in the past. She offers this description:

198	but I’ve been battling the depression
199	and going into those deep holes
199	and having bad dreams
199	and on rocky roads
199	and going down a hill with no brakes
200	and running in a lake
200	and uh the dreams were as bad as being awake
200	if not worse

She uses verse form to describe depression, each clause beginning with and, adding one description to the next. Deep holes, rocky roads, no brakes, she uses metaphors for pain, despair, and being out of control. There was no respite, she says, the nights were as bad as the days. Towards the end of the verse she rhymes the last word of each clause–

brake, lake, awake– a technique that increases the effect of the metaphors of losing control.

Eventually Alice sought help for the depression. She told this story:

1	184	OR	But um it when I came home then
2	184	EV	and it was so lonesome at home
3	184	EV	and I was depressed
4	185	OR	so I had a friend who had lost her mother and father-in-
	185		law both to cancer and I had
5	185	OR	a month after my husband died
6	186	CA	I went over and helped her with them
7	186	EV	and uh that was very depressing
8	187	CA	and so <i>his</i> daughter-in-law talked to me
9	187	OR	after they both died, you know close together, you
	187		know in a year
10	188	CA	she said “why don’t you go to a counselor”
11	189	CA	and she said it had really helped her
12	189	CA	and so she gave me some names
13	190	OR	and since that time
14	190	CA	I’ve been going for counseling
	190		[how long ago was that?]
15	191	OR	well it was 12 years it’s been 12 years
16	191	OR	cause it was just about a year after he died
	191		that I started going

Alice tells this story to illustrate both her increasing depression and her desire to care for and help her friends. After her return from Brazil, she helped a friend care for dying relatives. This was not an easy task because she was still depressed from her own loss, but she helped anyway. The outcome of helping her friend is that a younger woman in that family suggested that Alice seek help for the depression and told her that she too had sought help. Alice took her advice and began then to see a counselor.

She explains why she finally sought help

1	192	proposition	and (sighs) it’s I had to do something
2	192		it was I was <i>too</i> depressed and

3 192 and it was like it just kept getting worse
 4 193 like I'd been in a the pressure was weighing me down
 5 193 and and uh it was it was like being in a a dark
 194 cave or something
 6 194 and I I couldn't come out of it

As in other situations Alice determined to do something. This time she had no choice because the depression was more than she could stand. It was a pressure that weighed her down, a dark place that she could not get out of.

Alice did do something for the depression. She began therapy when she was 63 and has continued to work with the counselor over the years. She offers this example of what she has learned in counseling.

1 207 OR well for instance this month
 2 208 OR I have all this family
 3 208 OR so whenever they went through this town it was going
 209 someplace
 4 209 OR they'd want to stay all night
 5 209 OR want their breakfast
 6 210 OR and their dinner at night
 7 210 OR and and get up and leave at 5 o'clock in the morning you
 210 know
 8 211 CA and so I finally wrote a letter
 9 211 OR cause it started like in March and it would go to October,
 211 company all the time
 10 212 OR plus everything else
 11 212 CA and so this one year I just wrote a letter
 12 212 CA and I drew a picture of my house and the highway going
 213 by
 13 213 CA and I just had a (laughs) I had put a sign on the house that
 213 it was closed (laughs)
 14 214 CA and so they had to go on
 15 214 R well some of them got really teed off
 16 214 EV but I couldn't take it anymore

Alice begins with the prepositional phrase “for instance,” offering this story as an example of what she has learned in counseling. She has a large family and when they traveled through town, they expected to stay with her as guests. She repeats a theme in this story from her marriage. Some members of her family want only to use her to meet their needs, they do not recognize what she needs. She lists their demands: breakfast, dinner, leaving early in the morning. It began in the spring and lasted into the fall. When she could no longer meet these needs she wrote a letter, and sent a picture of her house with a closed sign on it. Some of them were angry, but she repeats that she “couldn’t take it anymore.” She said that most of her family understand her difficulties, and come to see her without making demands. She is sorry that all of them didn’t understand, but she “couldn’t help it.” Alice recognizes that she has legitimate concerns and that she can not be what they want, she has to be herself. Now she recognizes that it is acceptable not to be “of use” to people, most of them, like the other members of her family, will like her anyway.

Alice makes two points with this story. First she illustrates what counseling has meant, she learned to speak for herself and say no when she could not meet the expectations of her family. Alice has spoken with pride of her ability to earn a living and “take care” of her husband. In this story she illustrates her new ability to say what she needs, apart from her perception of what others needed or wanted from her. Secondly this story illustrates her method of explanation. Alice still finds it difficult to “speak” and she draws a picture to make her point. Although she sent her family a letter, presumably

explaining why she could no longer care for so many in her home, she emphasizes to me the picture that she drew to make her point.

At various times the counselor has referred Alice to a psychiatrist, and she now takes medication for depression and sleep disturbance. She is clearly aware of her health problems and says “this, now my health is what’s bothering me.” She recites a litany of the drugs that she now must take to maintain her health: lasix, lonoxin, potassium, sulfa drugs, prevarin, and coumadin. Yet despite her health problems, Alice declares that she is now doing well. She offers this explanation:

1	255		so that if I could know that everything else
	255		wasn’t going to fall apart
2	256		then it seems like it’s been one thing after another
3	256		plus the depression isn’t as bad
4	257	proposition	but uh I think I’ve probably done better lately
	257		than I ever have in my life [um hmm]
5	258		with the help of all the (laughs) psychiatrist
6	258		and medicine and everything else

Alice summarizes her life story in this simple explanation. It has been one thing after another. She describes her life now as a point of balance. It is not so bad, if she could just know that nothing else will happen to her health. She claims that all her efforts to cope with the depression have helped, she has probably done “better than I *ever* have in my life” (italics mine).

Summary

Alice tells a life story of hardship and struggle. She characterizes the sexual abuse in her childhood as a heavy weight hanging over her that has always been on her mind. She traces to it “great fear and apprehension,” as well as recurrent bouts of depression.

She uses a series of metaphors that imply lack of control to describe this recurrent depression and repeats the metaphors as a refrain throughout her life. The incident of sexual abuse that occurred when she was two or three began a pattern, Alice said, and the rest followed. Alice refers not just to other incidents of sexual abuse, but also to a particular kind of relationship with men that began in childhood and continued through her life. Alice casts herself as misused and without control in her relationships with men. She said: "it's it's as far as men are concerned um (5) and my marriages, I don't know, it's um uh I could never see anything very glamorous about a man, and um they only want one thing, they just want to use you." Men in her childhood used her sexually. Her first husband was not only unfaithful but he neglected her. She describes her second husband as a unfaithful. He would have left the marriage when he lost interest in having sex with her, she claims, had he not needed care during his long illness.

Alice did not resolve the effects of the abuse. She did not understand the impact that it had in her life when she was young. She said "I can't *explain* it all, you know, I mean I I don't think there's words to really (4) express it all." Instead she survived the abuse, the subsequent depression and the misuse by men through passive and active endurance. Endurance includes acquiescence, silence, and perseverance. It was an initial response to the abuse in her childhood that became a more global pattern of coping in her adult life. She continued this pattern of coping until her early 60's when she sought help for recurrent depression after her husband died.

Children frequently do not resist the abuser because they lack the ability or power to change the situation. They may also fear the intolerable loss of affection and nurturing that they get from their caretakers. Alice acquiesced to the sexual advances by her uncle and her father. Acquiescence is reflected in the language that Alice chooses to describe the abuse, i.e., “he had his sex,” she says, implying that her uncle had control in their relationship. Only the presence of the other children stopped her father from molesting, she claimed, she had no power to stop him.

Alice continued this pattern of acquiescence later in her life. She repeatedly relates circumstances in language that implies that she had little control or power in her marriages. “He took me to a trailer” she says of her first husband, suggesting his greater control. She let her second husband pick the church that they would attend after the marriage although she was an ordained pastor, because she “could worship anywhere.” She portrays her role as primary caregiver for her second husband as part of her role as wife. She provides a distinctive picture of the demands of caring for him, yet she offers little reason as to why she took on this role. She “just had to stay home and take care of him (her second husband).”

Alice’s pattern of acquiescing to men is not only part of the language of her narratives and explanations. Acquiescence is also part of the narrative structures that she tells throughout her life story. Many of the habitual narratives and stories that she constructs have lengthy orientation clauses, but a striking lack of evaluative clauses. The effect of the extended orientation is to draw a picture of the conditions in which the

events take place. In this way the orientation clauses function as evaluation. The scenarios include enough detail that they are persuasive and compel the listener to Alice's perspective. It is a subtle and indirect way to communicate, repeating refrains, drawing pictures rather than declaring direct statements of her feelings, what the events in her life meant to her. She defines by context, rather than by direct statements. She constructs her narratives to gain belief and understanding by implying these questions, here are the conditions, what else could I do, I had no choice, do you get the picture?

Alice claims silence as a way of surviving the abuse. Historically, families of this generation did not encourage discussion of problems (Knight, 1986). Children were admonished not to "air dirty laundry." As Alice told me, "we were told *what goes on in this house stays in this house.*" Thus, she was directly and indirectly discouraged by her parents from seeking help from any kind of external authority. Her father had made sexual gestures towards her and warned not to tell her mother what he had done. After that he became a potential threat, and she was not able to confide in him the abuse by her uncle. She was not able to seek help or ask for protection from him. She was also afraid to tell her mother about the abuse. She said, "if she [her mother] thought I'd done anything she'd have a *real* hysterical crying jag and so I was afraid to even talk to *her.*" She could not risk losing the little bit of protection and care that she seems to have had from her family and instead chose silence as a protective action. In childhood she protected herself from potential family reaction and protected her mother from pain and discomfort. As an adult she did not talk about the abuse easily. She describes this silence

as being “withdrawn.” She told her husband about the abuse by her father, and while he did not blame her, neither was he understanding. No one empathized. As she said, “I didn’t talk about it to anybody because they didn’t understand. Anyhow, I think if somebody hasn’t gone through it they don’t know what you’re talking about.” Alice did not talk about the abuse openly until late in life when she sought counseling for depression.

Alice not only describes silence as a way of coping with the abuse, she uses silence as part of the narrative structures and the structural organization of her life story. For example, she uses the chronicle, a form of discourse that provides information without evaluation to keep her emotional involvement with a woman in a cloak of ambiguity. In this way she imparts information that is part of her life story, but is silent about a relationship that is a potential source of shame or discomfort.

Alice also maintains silence in the overall structural organization of her life story. She tells her life story as four global episodes that enclose large periods of time and impart general themes. Alice uses these global episodes to construct a picture of a difficult and painful life. Although they are coherently linked they also omit large parts of her past. She closes off each episode from the questions, “how did I feel,” “what did this mean,” because to tell how she felt then, to tell what it meant to her, would bring the pain from the past into the present. With the use of these global episodes she is able to claim her past and still communicate to me the difficulty and hardship of her life. This organizational structure then allows Alice to endure her past without being emotionally

burdened by it, without reliving the emotional impact of a lifetime of unresolved effects of the abuse. Thus Alice chooses a structure that allows her to tell her life story coherently and effectively, and protects herself in the telling.

A feminist strategy for looking at women's lives suggests that the concept of a person as a singular voice is to miss important parts of their lives. Silence and acquiescence reflect a passive form of endurance, a bartering to obtain what one needs and does not think was possible any other way. Alice not only passively endured the abuse, the subsequent depression, and the difficulties in her marriage, but she actively endured, she persevered. Perseverance is the ability to proceed with one's life in spite of adversity. Alice declares that she coped with the difficult times in her life simply by going on in spite of them. For example, when asked how she coped with the abuse and other hardships in her life, Alice said "you grit your teeth and go." Although she was depressed, she said she "kept busy." She did what she had to do, she claims, she struggled to work and make a living throughout her life. She took on a difficult job of caring for her husband and managed it well.

Self determination is part of Alice's ability to persevere and it contrasts sharply to her pattern of acquiescence to men in her life. Alice exhibits self determination in the grammatical construction of her narratives and explanations. For example, she frequently uses the transitive verb form with I as subject. "I worked, I figured out, I analyzed." She suggested control in ending her first marriage, and in initiating her second one. She describes working throughout her life, and providing for herself and her husband. Alice

described self-determination as one of her strengths, something that helped her cope with adversity throughout her life. When overwhelmed by despair and adversity, she considered drinking as a means of escape and offered this explanation:

1	304		and something else you know
2	304		there have times when I I thought about you know
3	304		just taking a drink or getting drunk or something you know
4	305		but that I figured then analyzed it
5	305	proposition	that wasn't going to help anything [um hmm]
6	306		just made it worse. [Um hmm]
7	306		My grandfather was an alcoholic
8	307		and and I saw the kind of life he was living

Alice explains that she was able to problem solve difficult issues. She implies that she made a choice not to drink, based on analytic thinking. Although there were times she wanted to escape, she realized that drinking would not help, but would only make things worse.

Determination was evident throughout her life story. When she was in her early 20's she worked her way through bible college. She saved enough money to pay her tuition to a bible college, but ran out of money before the program ended. Instead of quitting she transferred to a less expensive school and graduated. This schooling, and the drive that she exhibited in obtaining it, "gave [her] strength." She talked about the difficulties in her life as challenges to be overcome. She said towards the end of our interview, "I do think that all the adversity and negative things gave me the *drive* to carry on and press forward to other things at all times, all my life."

Passive and active endurance reveal dual aspects of Alice's voice, an alternation between self determination and acquiescence. This duality is also demonstrated in Alice's ability to care for those around her. Although she was sexually abused in her childhood, and characterized her relationships with men as one of being misused, Alice demonstrates throughout her life an ability to care for those around her, including her second husband. Indeed, she describes her role as a caregiver with pride, listing the skills that she developed to care for this man. Although she believes that men in her life have used her and does not regard them well, she has not become embittered. Instead, her ability to care for those around her continues to provide emotional satisfaction. She helps friends with family illnesses and volunteers at a local hospital. Through her ability to care for others, Alice transcends the neglect and abuse in her childhood.

How effectively did Alice cope with the effects of the abuse? On one hand, enduring allowed Alice to survive things for which she was unable to seek help. Silence allowed her to keep whatever support and affection she could from her parents. Acquiescence allowed her to maintain relationships that she wanted, particularly with her second husband. Perseverance has allowed her pride in her accomplishments. Alice is financially comfortable, a consequence her capacity for adaptability and hard work. She is also a caring woman. With the endurance of a long distance runner, Alice persevered through the effects of the abuse and other adversities. By the time her husband had died, however, the abuse that had always been on her mind and the depression that she had experienced most of her life became unendurable. She was no longer busy and endurance

simply did not work anymore. She said, “things just stack up and I can’t handle them anymore. I can’t grit my teeth hard enough anymore.” At that point in her life she sought help from a therapist and says “it’s it’s it’s better since I have someone to talk to.”

Alice is now 75 years old. She tells a story of survival and endurance. How Alice tells her story is part of the story. Endurance is not only reflected in the language of the narratives and explanations that she recounted as she told her life story, but the narrative structures and organization of her life story are part of the way that she understands her life. She persevered in spite of the abuse and subsequent problems, and developed the capacity to care for those around her. She began to talk about the abuse only recently when she sought counseling for recurrent depression that she traces to the sexual abuse. Alice survived the abuse and endured the effects of it for most of her life. With therapy she has gained understanding and relief that is represented in her description of what her life is like now. Although she still must cope with chronic health problems that affect many older women, if her health holds, she is hopeful for her future. She makes the claim that her life is “better than it has ever been.”

Alice tells a highly coherent story of survival and endurance. She defines conditions and events by context rather than through direct statements of her thoughts and feelings. In this way she emphasizes the power of circumstances in her life, particularly her relationships with men. Alice organizes her life story into a global episodes that allows her to separate a painful and difficult past from the present. Thus the narrative structures that she uses and the way that she organizes her life story are part of her

understanding. They allow her to recount her story with pride and accomplishment, and claim hope for her future.

Chapter 4
A Triptych of Lives
Virginia: Finding Her Voice, A Life in Progress

Introduction

Virginia is a 57 year old woman, recently widowed, who lives in the Pacific Northwest. She began her life story with several accounts of childhood abuse and talked briefly of her recent marriage that ended last year when her husband died. She told the rest of her story in a series of temporal switchbacks, moving from one past time to the present to another past time, integrating what has happened with what is happening now. She has begun in the past year to see a counselor, seeking help for problems with her children that arose when her husband died. She describes her childhood in the initial part of the interview and included several narratives and explanations of this part of her life.

Childhood

Virginia began her life story with this habitual narrative.

1	1	OR	I was born in Oregon
2	2	OR	my mother was 17,
3	2	OR	my Dad was 24
4	2	OR	they were both from Oregon
5	3	OR	um I have a brother who is 18 months younger than me
6	3	OR	and a sister who was uh 7 years younger than me ah
	3		(sighs) (7)
7	4	OR	my Dad was a carpenter
8	4	OR	my Mom was a housewife,
9	4	OR	um I can remember when I was very little that at that time
10	5	OR	my Dad was working on the railroad
11	5	OR	and he worked nights
12	6	CA	and my Mom and um another lady friend would take off
13	6	CA	and go to the bars at night
14	6	CA	and us kids went along
15	7	EV	and it's amazing what you can remember even as a
	7		<i>small small</i> child.

16 7 EV But um (5) they did things in bars that little kids shouldn't have been around

Virginia introduces her family with this narrative. When she was young, she says, her mother and a friend would take her and the other children to bars at night while her father was at work. Virginia uses a habitual narrative to imply that this was not just an occasional night out, but a recurrent pattern of events. She asserts the truth of her memories in line 15, even though she was very young, she still remembers what happened. Virginia suggests that her mother's behavior was a breach of moral judgment because she saw her "do things" that small children shouldn't see. She does not assign blame for her mother's behavior, but rather implies judgment by describing the circumstances. In this way she uses the narrative structure to evaluate what her mother did.

With this information as a backdrop, Virginia then introduces her father:

1	9	OR	my Dad (5) was a man who liked women
2	10	OR	he liked to um (3) touch them in ways that he shouldn't
3	11	OR	he found ways of tickling girls or aunts or whatever
4	11	OR	and I can also remember that uh there were when times
	12		my Mom had to be in the hospital or something
5	12	CA	and and my Dad might invite one of her sisters along
6	13	CA	and we'd go along for a ride
7	13	EV	and he would get overly friendly (3)

Virginia described her mother as doing things in front of her children that she should not have done. With another habitual narrative, she characterizes her father as a man who touched women inappropriately. He "found ways" to tickle girls or other

relatives, even his wife's sisters. Again Virginia hints at, but does not declare moral transgression: the women were his relatives and his touches were sexual.

She then tells a story of an attempted molestation by her uncle.

1	13	OR	then when I was 7
2	14	OR	my grandparents and aunts and uncles came out from
	14		Indiana
3	14	OR	and uh I had an uncle who was 16 at that time
4	15	OR	who tried to molest me
5	15	CA	and I was able to keep him from going too far
6	16	CA	because I hit him over the head with a flashlight that was
	16		handy
	16		[I didn't hear that]
7	16	CA	I hit him in the head with a flashlight that happened to be
	17		handy
8	17	CA	um when I told my parents what he did
9	18	EV	they uh they wouldn't believe me or do anything about it

Virginia tells this incident in story form, a genre of narrative that implies a specific event. When she was seven, an older uncle tried to molest her, but she was able to stop his attack by hitting him with a flashlight. Virginia does not judge or criticize her uncle. The evaluation in this story is brief: her parents did not support her or believe her, nor did they offer protection from the uncle. She uses the verb "would" to imply that her parents chose their response deliberately, they could have believed her and talked to her uncle. She implies their neglect but does not overtly criticize them or hold them responsible. Although she was able to defend herself in this situation, her story is not told as a success story. Her efforts to resist the sexual advances of her uncle were not validated, he was not censured, nor was she protected from future advances.

Virginia then tells another habitual narrative about her father:

1	18	OR	as I was growing up my
---	----	----	------------------------

2	18	CA	Dad would um touch me in places
3	19	EV	that I was very uncomfortable with
4	19	OR	and my sister
5	19	CA	and like I say he liked to tickle
6	20	OR	and even bring girlfriends home
7	20	CA	and he'd do the same thing (3)

Virginia again uses a genre of narrative that emphasizes repeated, pervasive events. These events occurred during the time that she was growing up, i.e., over a number of years. Her father touched her in ways that made her very uncomfortable. He did this all the time to everyone: her, her sister, her aunts, her girlfriends. She implies that these events were pervasive in two ways: over time and all the time.

She then tells another habitual narrative about discipline in her family.

1	20	OR	my Dad was <i>really</i> a a pretty patient person,
2	21	OR	but my Mom who uh she wouldn't punish us kids first for
3	21	OR	doing something wrong,
4	22	OR	she'd say "wait until your Dad gets home"
5	22	OR	and then if Dad was had a bad day
6	22	OR	or was tired or something
7	23	OR	and if I got a spanking it was er got spankings
8	23	OR	I was usually first
9	23	OR	and it was with a razor strap
10	24	CA	and (3) he would lose it
11	24	OR	and there were numerous times
12	24	OR	when I could hardly walk from ah being beat with the
	24		razor strap uh (3)
13	25	CA	my Mom would stand back
14	25	CA	and <i>watch</i> this
15	25	CA	and say now Jack, now Jack"

Virginia illustrates a pattern of parental discipline. Her mother would not punish them, but instead reported their misbehaviors to their father who "spanked" them with a razor strap. Although her father could be patient, when he was tired or frustrated he lost

control and beat them. This punishment was frequent and severe. Virginia repeats her mother's words, suggesting the ineffectualness of her admonishments. Virginia stresses the verb "watch," as if to say, how could her mother let this happen. She suggests that her mother was not an innocent bystander, but rather was a woman who did not stop her husband from beating their children. She draws a convincing portrait of discipline that transgresses the bounds of appropriate behavior. She does this entirely without evaluative clauses, making her point contextually through the use of orientation clauses. Thus she implies that her parents were abusive but does not judge them or hold them accountable.

Virginia relates a story about being punished by her father.

1	26	AB	um there were 2 instances when I was in high school that
	26		he beat me up one
2	27	OR	and an possibly I asked for it
3	27	OR	I was just a rebellious teenager.
4	27	OR	I accidentally got drunk when I was a freshman
5	28	EV	it was as innocent as could be
6	28	OR	I'd gone to um a friends house with my boyfriend
7	29	OR	who happened to be it was his brother's house that
	29		I baby-sat for
8	29	OR	and it was uh Thanksgiving vacation
9	30	OR	and um they asked me if I wanted a glass of
	30		Mogan David wine
10	30	OR	and I drank wine at home once in a while and stuff
11	31	CA	of course I drank a glass
12	31	OR	and it tasted like juice
13	31	CA	and I drank another glass
14	32	CA	and the next thing I knew I was drunker than a skunk
15	32	OR	and when my Dad saw me when he came home
16	33	CA	I was sick in the bathroom
17	33	CA	and he beat me up trying to get me to tell him who did it
18	34	OR	so well nobody did it
19	34	OR	I did it to myself
20	34	R	and I had to face all the family the next day with
	34		blackened eyes and that and a bruised up face

Virginia switches from the habitual narrative about physical “discipline” to a story, a specific incident her father beat her. She was a rebellious teenager, but not atypical. Perhaps she asked for it, but the details of the story let the listener decide. She orients the story and claims that this was an innocent event, she got drunk by accident. When her father found her he beat her in an attempt to find out who had done this to her. She could not tell him, because no one else was responsible. She “had done it to herself.” The resolution of the story suggests a public acknowledgment that he beat her. She “faced” the family with blackened eyes and bruises. She offers another resolution to the story: although her family saw what her father had done, no one said or did anything about it.

Virginia uses this genre of narrative very effectively. Stories convince through the specificity of detail the truth or the point of what the narrator tells. Generally, this is accomplished through evaluative clauses. However, Virginia accomplishes this differently. She uses orientation clauses that provide context rather than direct statements about what she feels or thinks. She relates an incident when her father moved beyond discipline into violence and abuse, a time when he beat her. She says at the outset that maybe she deserved the punishment, after all she was a “rebellious” teenager. As she tells the story, however, Virginia makes her claim of innocence by implying that she did not deserve this treatment. She builds her case subtly, through contextual means: it was a holiday, having a glass of wine was within the bounds of normal behavior for her and for the family who offered her the wine. She did not know the potency of the wine,

consequently getting drunk was an accident. Her father assumed another context for what happened to her, but his suspicions were unreasonable and inappropriate. She restates her innocence by saying that she did this to herself. Thus Virginia constructs a persuasive account of undeserved parental violence and abuse through contextual detail.

Virginia also tells this story about her father.

1	41	OR	um (3) back in the high school (3) my Dad when I was
2	42	OR	I think it was between 8th grade going into freshman year
3	42	OR	um just had me a young lady so they say,
4	43	OR	and instead of my Mom telling me about the birds
	44		and the bees et cetera,
5	44	CA	my Dad invited me to a movie
6	45	OR	first time he'd done that
7	45	EV	so I thought it was a little strange
8	45	EV	but I thought oh this was special
9	45	OR	after the movie
10	45	CA	Dad took us for a ride in the country,
11	45	CA	took me for a ride in the country,
12	46	CA	and made me sit next to him (4)
13	46	CA	and then he started feeling my breasts
14	46	CA	and wanted me to kiss him
15	47	CA	and uh I started crying
16	47	CA	and got as far away as I could
17	47	EV	and that's probably what stopped him from going further,
18	48	EV	I don't know, maybe he would never have gone any
	48		further,
19	48	EV	I have no idea,
20	49	R	but I never wanted to be alone with my Dad after that.

Virginia again uses a story, this time to describe the time that her father molested her. She begins with a hint of sarcasm directed towards both of her parents. Her mother had not yet talked to her about sexuality although she had just reached puberty. Instead, her father introduces to her sexual relationships by trying to molest her. She comments indirectly on her relationship with her father: inviting her to a movie was something he

had never done before. After the movie he took her for a ride in the country and tried to molest her. She resisted his advances and he stopped. She returns to the present with a change in verb tense. She is still not sure whether he stopped because of her resistance or his own judgment. The consequences of this breach of trust were clear: she never wanted to be alone with him again.

Virginia later lived with an aunt and uncle while attending high school. She told a story about that time.

1	50	OR	Then I had an uncle by marriage that I worked on the
	50		ranch
2	51	OR	and uh my aunt was in the hospital
3	51	OR	so I was in charge of house and kids and
4	51	CA	I put the kids down for a nap
5	52	OR	and beings as we get up early and stuff,
6	52	OR	I thought well I'll lay down with them
7	53	OR	and then next thing I knew
8	53	CA	he'd came in and lay down beside me
9	54	CA	and started to put his arms around me and stuff
10	54	CA	and I was able to get away from him before he got in
11	55	EV	I don't know (p) I don't know <i>why</i> all my relatives
12	55	EV	why I attract men that way but apparently I do.

Virginia relates another incident of attempted sexual abuse by another uncle with this story. She was taking care of her nieces and nephews while her aunt was in the hospital. She suggests again the innocence of her circumstances, she fell asleep with the children. While she slept her uncle came in and made sexual advances to her. Virginia suggests that she was able to resist and get away from him before he raped her. She closes this story however, with a question that is an accusation both to her family and to herself. She has told of repeated sexual advances by two uncles and her father. She starts to ask

why *all* these relatives, and then breaks off her thought. It must be because she attracts them or that kind of attention. When she says that she does not know what it is that she does, she claims that it must be *her* fault. Although Virginia again prevailed over this advance by her uncle, she tells a story of failure not of success. She assumes responsibility for the abuse: she attracts this attention therefore it must be her fault.

The last story of sexual abuse occurred when she was 14 or 15.

1	55	OR	When I was 16, no I was a freshman, um (3)
2	56	OR	I was baby-sitting for this lady that I baby-sat for a long
	56		time
3	57	OR	and there was this boy that lived in the same apartment
	57		building and stuff
4	57	OR	and he'd came down to visit me before
5	58	OR	but this night he brought 2 of his friends down
6	58	CA	and started just visiting and stuff
7	59	EV	and I didn't think anything about it,
8	59	CA	I let them in the house
9	60	CA	and the next thing I knew I was being threatened with
	60		rape from all three
10	60	CA	and the one did rape me. (3)
11	60	EV	and of course I couldn't tell anybody.
12	61	EV	I never could talk to my Mom
13	61	EV	because anytime I told her anything she would tell it to
	62		friends and neighbors or relatives in front of me
	62		et cetera. (4)
14	62	R	so I carried that (5)

Virginia provides the setting for this incident. When she was 14 years old a boy that she knew came to visit her with two friends while she was baby-sitting. She let them in because she knew them and trusted them. Once in, they threatened her with rape and then one of them raped her. Virginia does not mention the social repercussions of talking about rape in the early '50's. She assumes that I know what they are because she says, "of

course I couldn't tell anybody." She could not tell her mother because she did not trust her mother to respect her feelings. Consequently she told no one. Later she recounted the death by drowning of a small cousin. She says that "*once again* (my emphasis) I had no one to talk to. I cried and (9) I still have a hard time with all this stuff (7)." She uses the word "again" to suggest the frequency of these circumstances and her subsequent isolation. She returns to the present with the change of verb tense and claims that the emotional pain of these incidents continues into her life now.

Virginia weaves a narrative of her childhood with habitual narratives that describe a background of normative physical abuse and constant sexual touching by her father. She includes in the picture stories of sexual abuse by her uncles and father. She repeats the themes of silence and isolation because there is no one for her to talk to about these things. She constructs a picture of neglect and abuse with lengthy orientations of extended contextual detail and few direct statements of her feelings. If her parents are guilty of what she describes, it is by implication.

Virginia offers to share responsibility for this picture of her childhood: "we just didn't get along," she says of her parents. She was "rebellious, a handful," she admits. Her family of five often lived in cramped spaces as her parents struggled to make a living, and she wanted to get away from them. Eventually she moved away from home while she finished her last two years of high school. Virginia proposes that her parents "didn't have real good role models for um being a good parent." Her mother, whose father was an alcoholic, grew up in a large family. Both of her father's parents were orphans and she

suggests that her father's father may have been abused by the folks that took him in to live. They had little education and were very young when they became parents. She "feels sorry for my folks" because they had so little. There were extenuating circumstances, she claims, that explain their neglect and abuse. Thus she extends understanding and sympathy to her parents as she continues with her life story.

Despite the compassion she feels for them, she ultimately breaks off communications with her parents and explains what happened in this story.

1	98	AB	I had broken off relationships with my parents about
	98		13 years ago.
2	98	OR	I found that I was a 43 year old woman who was still
	99		frightened of her Dad
3	99	OR	um we'd had a little family squabble
4	100	OR	and I had decided that I um <i>all</i> the years I kept trying to
	100		make a relationship
5	101	OR	but yet every time they would come to my house
6	101	OR	I would be literally sick to my stomach
7	101	OR	I would try (4) to still be a family
8	102	OR	and um I found I couldn't
9	102	OR	my Mom um you could never tell her anything otherwise
	103		she told <i>everybody</i> , a stranger- she didn't care who it was
10	103	CA	and finally she had told a story I'd asked her not to tell
	104		anyone (3)
11	104	CA	and she kept doing it
12	104	CA	and I said "I don't want to see you anymore"
13	105	CA	and so I wouldn't see her anymore
14	105	CA	and my Dad came to my house
15	105	CA	and started talking to me about it
16	106	CA	and and making comments about this and that
17	106	CA	and getting madder by the minute
18	107	CA	and if my husband hadn't walked in the back door when
	107		he did
19	107	CA	I know that my Dad would have hit me again.
20	108	R	So I told him I never wanted to see him again.
21	108	EV	Saddest thing is is I couldn't explain to him <i>why</i>
22	109	CA	I tried to
23	109	CA	and they didn't understand

24	109	CA	and the only thing I got out of it was a letter from my
	109		Mom
25	110	CA	saying that I was a <i>wild child</i>
26	110	CA	and caused them nothing but <i>problems</i>
27	111	CA	and they didn't <i>understand</i>
28	111	EV	and so I kind of just thought well I don't know how to
	112		write anything to them to make them understand
29	112	EV	so um that's the sad thing
30	112	CO	I couldn't tell them that

In a long orientation, Virginia contextualizes how and why she broke off relations with her parents. Even though she was an adult, she continued to be afraid of her father. She still did not trust her mother to respect her feelings because her mother repeatedly breached Virginia's confidences. When Virginia broke off relations with her father became angry and she felt threatened. Had her husband not come in, she says, her father would have hit her. She uses the word "again," evoking the times he hit her as a child. She makes the claim then, that her response to her father was based on her continued fear of him. She resolves this story by breaking off relations with them.

Her resolution to the story, however, is not just in response to this particular incident. Rather it is a response to all the stories she has told about her father. This action resolves her whole history with him. She emphasizes her parents lack of understanding by recounting their attempts to blame her for what happened. Virginia was lost and did not know how to "make them understand." She expresses her feelings in one line, it is sad that she cannot explain to them why she can not see them. Again Virginia builds her case indirectly, not directly, by using contextual detail to describe the inappropriateness of her family's behavior. She closes the story with a coda that returns to the present. She repeats

again what is most distressing, not that they have shared a mutually unhappy past, but that she “couldn’t explain to them.” She evokes the thread of her earlier comment “once again I had no one to talk to.” She does not say that the problem is theirs as well as hers, nor does she say that they were unwilling or unable to understand her. Instead she assumes responsibility for their mutual lack of communication and resolution.

The breach with her parents continues to the present, although she visited her father in the hospital before he died. He still did not understand what had happened, and she “couldn’t tell him then either.” She reiterated her inability to have contact with her mother because of her mother’s lack of respect for her feelings. She cares about her, however, and said that “I sent her a mother’s day card probably for the first time in 14 years just to let her know that I’m thinking of her, but I can’t be with her.”

Marriage

After talking about her childhood, Virginia began to talking about her marriage and her present life. Her marriage ended recently, slightly more than a year ago. She is now coping with her husband’s death and the grief of her adult children and at the same time she is attempting to begin a new life. Because of these circumstances, her past is very much a part of her present. As she talked, Virginia did not follow a linear time sequence. Rather switched back and forth in time, from one past time to the present to another past time. She described problems in her marriage and problems that she faces now. Virginia’s movement back and forth in time as she tells her story, is a reflection of the way that she understands her current life. As she spoke, she attempted to integrate

what is happening now with what has happened before, weaving a coherent story, tracing some of her current problems with her children to underlying themes from her childhood and her marriage. My reconstruction of Virginia's story cuts across these temporal switches and I have reconstructed the order of the discourse units in order to illustrate the problems and struggles that she recounts. This reconstruction is indicated by the second set of line numbers of each unit that refer to their placement in the original transcript.

Virginia explained that in the year since her husband died she has experienced difficulties with her adult children. In the spring, several months before our interview, she tried to commit suicide, but was found by a man with whom she is currently involved. Her children do not know of her suicide attempt. She is trying now, with the help of a counselor, to "work things out" with her children. Virginia was married for 37 years, but says that it was not a happy marriage. She traces many of the problems she is now experiencing with her children to the abuse in her childhood. She also traces problems in her marriage to the abuse and offers this explanation:

1	116		I had a husband that was <i>wonderful</i> uh
2	116		he was very good to me
3	117	proposition	but he couldn't talk to me
4	117		and I couldn't
5	117		I had no one to really be able to talk to about
	118		these things
6	118		and make them understand
7	118		and even about our life um (4)
8	118		it did a <i>lot</i> of damage to our marriage

Virginia begins by emphasizing that her husband was a wonderful man. He was good to her, but there was a flaw, he could not talk to her. She had no one else to talk to.

Thus she repeats the refrain of silence and isolation from her childhood. She was silent about the events of her childhood, and that silence carried over to her life with her husband. This inability to communicate, a continuing theme from her childhood, took a toll on their marriage.

She described her marriage with this habitual narrative:

- | | | | |
|----|-----|----|---|
| 1 | 265 | OR | for years off and on I was in and out of the hospital um |
| 2 | 266 | OR | there was 2 times when every month I was in the hospital |
| 3 | 266 | OR | it was something to do with it coincided with my periods |
| 4 | 267 | OR | and I was having periods |
| 5 | 267 | OR | and I'd end up with this terrible pain |
| 6 | 268 | OR | and sometimes going to the hospital in the ambulance |
| 7 | 268 | OR | cause I couldn't walk um um |
| 8 | 268 | OR | so consequently I developed <i>ulcers</i> along with the rest |
| | 269 | | of it |
| 9 | 269 | OR | and I had a husband that was over protective |
| 10 | 270 | CA | and he would protect me from my own children (3) |
| 11 | 270 | CA | you know, "you can't do this you can't do that you might |
| | 273 | | make Mom sick" or this and that |
| 12 | 273 | OR | at that point I'd already developed ulcers |
| 13 | 273 | OR | so that any time that um (3) there was extra stuff to do |
| 14 | 274 | EV | and I'm pusher, and if I don't feel good I push myself |
| | 274 | | harder, |
| 15 | 275 | EV | and when I don't feel good |
| 16 | 275 | EV | I also recall my little background [um hmm] |
| 17 | 275 | EV | and that doesn't help |
| 18 | 276 | R | and I could never I never told my husband or anybody |
| | 277 | | about this until in '81 |
| 19 | 277 | OR | after I had the hysterectomy |
| 20 | 277 | OR | and hit the low spot |

Virginia uses a habitual narrative and a long orientation to describe years of chronic illness. Using words like "in and out, every month," she underscores the frequency of circumstances. This was a debilitating illness, complicated by the development of ulcers. She uses her husband's words to describe the way that he coped

with her illness. He protected her and tried to win their children's good behavior by admonishing them not to make their mother sick. Virginia's response to stress was to push herself harder. When things were difficult the abuse she experienced in childhood intruded, complicating her illness even more. She concludes that in 1981, when she was 43, after 24 years of marriage she hit a low spot.

This low spot occurred after the confrontation with her father. She describes it in this way: "I had a, I don't know if you'd call it a breakdown or what but when I was, it was in '81, I came to rock bottom." She contacted a minister whom she had met, and told him about the abuse and her feelings of suicide. "He's the first one I ever told my story to." She tells this story about the consequences.

- | | | | |
|----|-----|----|--|
| 1 | 277 | OR | and the one thing the minister had me do |
| 2 | 278 | OR | after I got comfortable with it |
| 3 | 278 | CA | is sit down |
| 4 | 278 | OR | and he came with me |
| 5 | 278 | CA | and we told my family my story |
| 6 | 279 | EV | and um which helped my kids somewhat |
| 7 | 279 | OR | because when they were little and growing up |
| 8 | 279 | OR | they'd do something |
| 9 | 280 | OR | I'd say "you just better count your blessings, you don't |
| | 280 | | know how lucky you are" |
| 10 | 281 | EV | which was bad, um (3) |
| 11 | 281 | EV | I could never explain to them the things why um (5) |

With the minister's assistance and encouragement, she told her family about her childhood and then her children understood then why she had acted as she did. (Her children ranged in age from 13 to 23 at the time of the interview.) When Virginia began to speak of this part of her life she said "my kids know and understand." She uses the present tense of the verbs indicate that their understanding of the impact of the abuse in

her life carries into the present time. Knowing about her past was the key to her children's understanding.

Although talking about the abuse and neglect in her childhood helped her children understand her, the sexual abuse that she experienced continued to intrude in her marriage. She illustrates with this habitual narrative:

- | | | | |
|----|-----|----|--|
| 1 | 119 | OR | um my husband had a bad heart |
| 2 | 119 | OR | he'd had a triple bypass when he was in his early 40's |
| 3 | 120 | OR | and had a heart attack after we moved down here |
| 4 | 120 | OR | which was would have been 8 years ago this month. |
| 5 | 121 | EV | And the sad thing is |
| 6 | 121 | OR | we knew that we were on borrowed time |
| 7 | 121 | OR | and in those last years |
| 8 | 122 | CA | I'd look at my husband |
| 9 | 122 | CA | and I'd see my Dad |
| 10 | 122 | EV | and I don't know why, just certain looks, you know, |
| | 123 | | profiles |
| 11 | 123 | CA | and I drew further and further apart from him. um |

During the last years of her marriage her husband suffered severe heart problems that eventually caused his death. Although they knew that he did not have long to live, they grew apart, not together, because husband reminded her of her father. Virginia draws a picture of lost opportunities with this story, a picture of remaining isolated and apart while time ran out. In this way the abuse by her father when she was a child continued to interrupt and disrupt her married life.

She then told this habitual narrative:

- | | | | |
|---|-----|----|---|
| 1 | 123 | OR | when we were first married |
| 2 | 124 | OR | if he tried to touch me you know |
| 3 | 124 | CA | come up like a husband would |
| 4 | 124 | EV | it just turned me off |
| 5 | 124 | CA | and I would freeze |
| 6 | 125 | R | and um our marriage just wasn't as good as it could |

have been (5)

Virginia describes in this narrative her sexual response to her husband. She was “turned off” by his sexual touches although she recognizes that these were normal touches “like a husband would” make. She hints that she was unhappy, but says only that the marriage was not as good as it could have been.

Later in the interview she offered this explanation:

1	577		we did have a lot of good years
2	558		and and I don't know (4) I don't know where we started
	558		really pulling apart
3	558	proposition	I think I think it was because I finally faced so many
	558		things in '81
4	559		and I tried to (4) um I tried to make him understand at
5	559		different times what I was going through
6	560		and what I needed out of <i>our</i> relationship um
7	560		it's hard for a man, maybe to understand
8	561		I kept try to get him to understand that I needed (3)
9	561		I need more than anything to be held um just cuddled
	561		with,
10	562		without just going clear to the lovemaking bit and the
	562		whole nine yards, um
11	563		I could never get him to understand that
12	563		and maybe I pushed him away
13	564		when I would try to say that I didn't want him to come up
14	564		and touch me like my Dad did [in a sexual way] yeah

Virginia begins with a disclaimer, her marriage was not all bad, but after the confrontation with her father and her subsequent breakdown they began pulling apart when she faced the abuse in her past. The confrontation, breakdown, and facing her past did not bring them together because her husband did not share any understanding of what the abuse meant in their marriage. Virginia stresses with repetition that she tried to explain to him what was happening and what she needed from him. Maybe it was not his

fault, she suggests. Maybe it was because he was a man, maybe men don't understand these things. She takes responsibility for some of what happened, "maybe I pushed him away." She explains what she needed from her husband and why he needed to understand the impact of the abuse by her father. Her past intruded into her marriage because the way that her husband touched her reminded her of her father's sexual gestures. This is why she explains that she needed nonsexual affection. Thus she causally links the abuse by her father to the sexual problems with her husband. She repeats as a refrain her attempts to achieve understanding of what she wanted and needed and his inability to hear her. This lack of communication was a wedge in Virginia's relationship with her parents and it became a wedge in her marriage that drove her and her husband apart.

She extends her description of her marriage with this explanation

1	134		Um (6) I needed him really the last few years with my leg
2	135		and uh I lost my sister
3	135		and a cousin
4	135		and my Dad
5	136		and my grandfather
6	136		and some very dear friends that I had
7	136		a lady friend that her and I'd adopted each other more or
	137		less
8	137		and I lost her
9	137	proposition	and he could not um help me through those moments
10	138		he couldn't he couldn't uh hold me or hug me
11	138		and maybe it's because we'd just got further and further
	138		apart
12	139		and maybe it was because I kept seeing my Dad when I
13	139		looked at him and (3)

Virginia describes the last years of her marriage as a time of repeated losses:

personal injuries that required surgery, the deaths of several friends in her life, including

her best friend. She needed her husband but he could not offer physical affection or comfort that was not sexual. Maybe they had grown apart, she suggests, because she kept seeing her father in her husband. Virginia links the abuse in her childhood to problems in her marriage, repeating the themes of loss, lack of communication, and subsequent isolation.

She then tells this story:

- | | | | |
|----|-----|----|---|
| 1 | 250 | OR | and my husband (5) he loved me too much |
| 2 | 251 | OR | he held me very high on a pedestal |
| 3 | 251 | EV | and to where I felt that (4) I wondered if I'd fall you |
| | 252 | | know um (5) |
| 4 | 252 | EV | I always felt very lucky to have found him um |
| 5 | 252 | EV | he took very good care of me, too good, |
| 6 | 252 | EV | he was over protective uh |
| 7 | 253 | CA | he did <i>all</i> the bookkeeping and all that sort of thing |
| 8 | 253 | CA | so I had no idea (3) |
| 9 | 253 | | what was going on |
| | 254 | CA | [what was going on?] |
| 10 | 254 | CA | I didn't find out until after he died (3) um (4) |
| | 254 | | [what didn't you find out?] |
| 11 | 255 | CA | well our finances are not uh very good, |
| 12 | 255 | CA | I'm still paying for this house at \$600 almost \$700 a |
| | 256 | | month |
| 13 | 256 | CA | he used charge cards that I had no idea how deeply in |
| | 256 | | debt we were |
| 14 | 257 | CA | there's still there's a life insurance policy that I can't find |
| 15 | 257 | CA | and that I could use very much |
| 16 | 257 | EV | I have no idea where to look |

This story shifts the picture she has provided of her marriage, revealing another side of her husband's generosity. He not only protected her, he kept information from her. When he died she discovered they were deeply in debt and she still does not know where

to look for her husband's life insurance policy. She indicates in the last lines of this story that his protection is now hurting her.

Virginia later extends this ambivalent picture of her husband. He was loving and caring but he was also "overly" protective, i.e., he was controlling, and she is now experiencing consequences of that protection. She describes him as a controlled man, he was "like a military person, he you know, he ate at certain times, he slept at certain times." Virginia tells this hypothetical narrative that illustrates his authority.

1	407	OR	If the kids asked if we bought a
	407	CA	for instance how much did the car cost
2	408	CA	"that's not any of your business it's for me to
3	409	CA	I'm the caretaker of this family
4	409	CA	I will do it"
5	409	R	and that's the way he did things

Virginia tells this story in response to my comment that it must have been hard for her husband to want to be in control and then to learn that he was dying. "yeah it must have been," she replied "but he wouldn't *share* anything like that with the kids." She then offers conjectured circumstances to show not only how her husband controlled finances but also how he controlled decision making. If their kids asked a question about money, he responded that he was the boss, he was the head of the family. "This was the way he did things" she says, using this hypothetical incident as an example of general conditions of their marriage. Not only was he unable to share things with her, he did not share things with his children.

She then told this habitual narrative:

1	409	OR	so being so in debt and me not knowing it
2	410	EV	and the things is is that it would be hard for me to

	410		understand
3	411	CA	because sometimes he would say “well we can’t afford this”
	411		and the next day or so he would turn around
4	411	CA	and spend a bunch money on something else you know.
5	412	CA	And I’m going now wait a minute
6	412	EV	

Virginia offers this narrative to illustrate why she was unaware of their financial predicament. Her husband not only decided what they could and could not buy, but his decisions were inconsistent. Virginia claims that her husband’s control of money was arbitrary and capricious. Although she has stressed his generosity to her, she makes clear in this narrative that he maintained control of their finances. In the last line she changes to the present tense indicating that only now does she recognize the implication of the contradiction of his actions.

Virginia spoke for a few minutes at the end of these two stories about her financial difficulties. Then she summed up this story and the previous one with this comment, “I feel sorry for people who can’t *share* those things with his own wife and family and they need to learn those things to know how to live.” Her husband was good to her, but he was not able to share things with either her or their children. Now that he is dead, they are all living with the consequences of this inability to give up or share control.

Virginia slowly revealed an ambivalent picture of her husband. Through a variety of narrative devices and explanations she claims that although he was loving, he was also controlling. She reiterates that his inability to talk to her exacerbated their problems. He was warned six months before he died that his health was failing, but he would not talk about it. She explains:

1	129		I feel sad for my husband (8) uh
2	129		I'm angry with my husband
3	130		because we couldn't talk
4	130	proposition	it was so many things that that were left unsaid
5	130		that there was a chance
6	130		we had the time
7	131		we knew he was dying um
8	131		it could have been cleared up or talked about or um (5)
	131		shared
9	132		whatever I don't know
10	132		I feel he cheated me
11	132		and I feel cheated his kids

She moves in this explanation between the present and the past, linking her feelings now to what happened then. Her husband did not talk or could not talk to her before he died. They could have come together and resolve problems in their marriage if he had been able to talk to her. Instead things were left unsaid, and now she feels cheated and angry.

Virginia suggests that he was afraid of dying, even though they faced it when he was in his forties. He just “never would (5) really admit that it would happen, I think, to him.” Her husband did not talk to her, and he did not talk to their children either. By not facing “the truth” she claims, he left things unsaid with his children. She explains:

1	259	proposition	but he wasn't he would never face (3) the truth
2	259		he would never face
3	260		he wouldn't deal with it
4	260		he wouldn't be honest with his kids about it uh
5	261		I would try to explain to him how <i>serious</i> it was
6	261		he would laugh it off
7	261		“I'm OK” blah blah blah
8	262		and they had some things they needed to deal with
9	262		and they didn't get it done
10	262		and now they're blaming me

Her husband would not accept his illness and did not face the fact that he was dying. He had the chance to talk to their children and resolve their disagreements, but he did not. Although she encouraged him to do so, he denied “the truth.” His inability to share his feelings with their children isolated him from them and left all of them with things unsaid. Now the children blame her for things that they needed to settle with their father, and she feels burdened by his inability to communicate.

Virginia constructs a complicated picture of her marriage. She explained:

1	634	I was not happy in my marriage, uh
2	635	maybe he loved me more than I loved him back
3	635	I don't know um
	635	[can you describe a little bit of why you were unhappy]
4	636	it was really hard
5	636	because I tried to tell him especially in the last few years
6	637	because we just seemed to have grown so far apart um (7)
7	637	we did a lot of things together um
8	638	proposition but we didn't share a lot of things

Virginia has described her husband as a wonderful man. He loved her, she admits. They grew apart, however, because he was unable to share with her the things that she needed. Virginia's picture of her marriage reflects her ambivalent feelings about her husband. On the one hand he was generous and bought her things. At the same time, he was controlling in a way that could be arbitrary and capricious. He did not understand the impact of the abuse in Virginia's childhood on their marriage and could not validate her feelings about his sexual touches. He did not respond to her requests for affection that was not sexual. He maintained control in the relationship, but at the expense of intimacy and sharing, and as a result she became isolated from him. Virginia links the abuse by her

father to the sexual problems she experienced with her husband, and she also links the themes of lack of communication and subsequent isolation in her childhood to her marriage.

The Present

Before her husband died, Virginia began to develop interests of her own, learning to do things that she had wanted to do for a long time, things that she enjoyed doing. She took art classes. She bought a horse and began “herding cows.” She talked her husband into selling the house they had lived in while they raised their family and moving into a smaller house. These activities caused conflict with her children that she describes in the next two narratives.

1	504	AB	that’s a real bone of contention.
2	505	AB	They don’t like me to do cows.
3	505	OR	I went into my second childhood when I moved down
	505		here,
4	505	OR	I got myself a horse
5	506	OR	and I do cows.
6	506	EV	And I <i>love</i> it.
7	506	EV	It means <i>so</i> much to me
8	506	EV	and it makes them <i>so angry</i> .
9	507	OR	Especially the daughter from California.
10	507	OR	Cause I finally had to tell her
11	508	CA	she would just call and say “Mom we’re coming, we’ll
	508		be there for a week”
12	508	CA	and I’ll say “Maggie you know this is the time when I
	509		start moving cows”
13	509	OR	and she didn’t like that idea
14	510	OR	because she thought that her and the grandkids should be
	510		most important in my life
16	510	CA	and I just <i>asked</i> them for the respect of thinking that I
	511		<i>do</i> have a life
17	511	EV	and it would be nice if they would call me up and say
	512		“Mom are you busy, can we come up”
18	512	OR	or when they come up,

19 512 OR I'm not herding cows every day,
 20 513 OR maybe just *one* day out of the whole time that they're here
 21 513 R but that makes them so upset

Virginia offers this habitual narrative as an example of the conflict that she is currently experiencing with her children. She uses a narrative form that implies these are recurring events. The abstract introduces the theme of the narrative: the “bone of contention” is that they do not want her doing some of the things she has begun to do. She went into her second childhood, she says, and has taken up herding cows. Her children are upset, especially a daughter who lives out of town. This daughter thought that she and her children should come first in her mother’s life and wants Virginia to be home when she visits. Virginia asserts the reasonableness of her requests to her children: she is available most of the time when they visit, but asks that they check with her before they make their plans. She wants her children to respect the part of her life that is separate from theirs, repeating to me the words that she would like them to say. In the last line of the story Virginia returns to the present tense, at this point there is no resolution, her children are still upset.

She tells another story about this conflict:

1 641 OR when we lived up on the hill,
 2 642 CA and I decided to try and get a horse
 3 642 CA and I'd made money with my art for to buy a horse and
 643 stuff
 4 643 CA and I you know lets get a smaller house,
 5 643 OR we had a 5 bedroom home
 6 644 CA and um so I found out this house was maybe for sale
 7 644 OR and these folks were looking for a bigger house
 8 645 OR and I had a friend that had traded houses with somebody
 9 645 EV and it worked out pretty good
 10 645 CA so we I talked to this lady about trading the house

11 646 R and um my kids were so mad at me
 12 646 OR my boys were had just graduated from high school
 13 647 OR and that had been their house all their lives
 14 649 R And um they were just madder than heck
 15 649 OR I mean these people were leaving us
 16 650 OR they we didn't *need* all these bedrooms
 17 650 OR and all this stuff for me to have to clean and take care of.
 651 [Why were they mad at you?]
 18 651 R because I'd sold their home

When she decided to get a horse, Virginia suggested to her husband that they get a smaller house. Their last two children, twin boys, had left home and she no longer wanted to care for a large house. She found and arranged a trade for a smaller house, a trade that worked well. Although her sons had moved away, they were angry with her for selling “their” home, a home she no longer needed.

Virginia describes the conflict of meeting the expectations of her children and establishing an identity beyond her role of mother. She reinforces this conflict by bringing together different genres of narrative with the same theme. She tells a habitual narrative and a story that illustrate her children’s unhappiness with changes she made in her life before her husband’s death. She emphasizes their anger and resentment in narrative form. first telling a habitual narrative that indicates the repetitiveness of her daughter’s dissatisfaction. She then tells a story of a specific incident to outline her sons’ anger for selling their home.

This conflict between Virginia and her children has recently intensified. Virginia became involved in a new relationship three months after her husband died. She is happy

and cares for this man, but the relationship has created new anger and resentment from her children, exacerbating the existing conflict. She tells this story:

- | | | | |
|----|-----|----|---|
| 1 | 346 | OR | later on in the summer |
| 2 | 346 | OR | it was about 3 months after Hal died |
| 3 | 347 | CA | that I started going out with Tom |
| 4 | 347 | EV | that was too <i>soon</i> for my kids |
| 5 | 348 | EV | but the biggest mistake I made is |
| 6 | 348 | CA | I asked um for their OK (3) |
| 7 | 348 | EV | and I shouldn't have done that |
| 8 | 349 | CA | because they literally told me it wasn't OK |
| 9 | 349 | CA | but I went ahead and did it anyway. |
| 10 | 349 | OR | and they didn't like that |
| 11 | 350 | OR | they didn't like the idea that a man would ask me out that |
| | 350 | | soon |
| 12 | 350 | OR | and take advantage of me um |
| 13 | 351 | EV | I was trying to be honest with them |
| 14 | 351 | EV | and letting them know that I didn't die |
| 15 | 351 | EV | that their Dad died |
| 16 | 352 | EV | and I found that I was still very much of a woman um |
| 17 | 352 | OR | my husband and I hadn't been able to have uh much of a |
| 18 | 353 | | sex relationship since he had his heart attack |
| 19 | 353 | OR | because of all the medication involved um (5) |
| 20 | 354 | CA | anyway so I had a son that was ready to beat Tom up, (3) |
| 21 | 356 | CA | the other son wasn't talking about it um (3) |
| 22 | 356 | EV | so what I've done I've taken their home away from |
| | 356 | | them (3) |
| 23 | 357 | CA | one daughter informed me that I had swept 37 years of |
| | 357 | | marriage |
| 24 | 358 | CA | and being a mother under the rug like dirt (4) |
| 25 | 358 | R | I have a lot things I'm trying to very hard to work through |
| 26 | 359 | R | and and still keep the relationships open |
| 27 | 359 | EV | but it's it's getting harder and harder |
| 28 | 359 | CO | when I'm with my kids now I feel like an outsider |
| 29 | 360 | CO | and like I'm um (4) like I have no children |

Virginia describes her current predicament with this story. She talked with her children about the relationship that she began shortly after her husband died and asked for their approval which they did not give. Consequently, she became involved without it and

her children are angry and disappointed. Virginia realizes that while she was ready for this relationship her children were not. She provides additional context for this difference. Although her children feared this man was taking advantage of her, she wanted this new relationship. Her children do not know that she and her husband had not had a sexual relationship for eight years before he died. She has found sexual fulfillment, i.e., she is still “very much a woman” but they do not understand why this is so important to her. She sums up the story by saying that she is trying hard to keep her relationship with her children open. Then she returns to the present with the coda: she feels estranged from her children. Again, the lack of communication threatens her relationships, this time with her children, and again she assumes the burden of the problem, she is the outsider.

After 37 years of marriage Virginia is attempting to build a new life. She has recently moved in with Tom and is exploring her feelings about him. She said “I love (him), but there’s parts of him I’m not real thrilled about.” After living with him she has learned that he is impatient and has a bad temper. More importantly, he does not communicate well. She asked “is this one part (the sexual relationship) so good that I can overcome this other part?” Virginia said that she is uncertain how this relationship will develop, but wants it to work for her. Her children, however, do not approve. In the spring, Virginia, troubled by this conflict, attempted suicide. She was found by Tom before she “was successful.” Her children did not understand their parent’s marriage. They did not know of Virginia’s unhappiness, or of the years of sexual dissatisfaction. They do not recognize now that their grief for their father is different than their mother’s

grief for her husband. Virginia has not told her children of this attempt, and they are not aware of the depths of their mother's despair. Thus she experiences again problems with communication, this time with her children, resulting again in isolation and loss.

As Virginia told her life story, she repeated these themes of isolation and loss that resulted from the lack of understanding and communication that began with the abuse in her childhood and that continued through her life. She also described other ways that the abuse affected her. She said, "all my life I've thought about um committing suicide or wishing I could die." Whenever she has a bad day and looks in the mirror, she remembers the abuse. She explained how the abuse affected and her how her life might have been different without the abuse:

1	427		well I don't like myself most of the time (4) um yeah
2	427	proposition	I think it chan- I think I think things would have been a lot
3	428		different. I don't know how
4	428		but um you always wonder you know what did you do
	428		wrong
5	428		um why (4) why did it happen to you
6	429		and what did you do to make it happen and and um yeah
7	430		but I still um it it always bothers me
8	430		because there's there will be times when um we would go
	431		out or something
9	431		and um men seem to be attracted to me
10	432		I mean it's supposed to be it should be a compliment to
11	432		me
12	432		it made me uncomfortable (7) um (p)
13	434		I think definitely my life would have been different
14	434		I might have liked myself better I don't know

Virginia indicated the difficulty of this question with hesitations and pauses. Her life would have been different without the abuse, she emphasizes with repetition. She did

not like herself “most of the time,” and attributes this low self-esteem to the abuse. She still asks why it happened to her, what did she do to make it happen, what did she do wrong. In this way she assumes responsibility for the attention she did not want. She does not place responsibility for the abuse on the perpetrators or on her parents for neglecting to protect her. She is still uncomfortable when men are attracted to her because it reminds her of the abuse. Virginia brings the past and present together in this narrative, all these things “still” bother her.

Virginia presents her current life as a transitional state, and describes a continuing clash between the her children’s expectations for her as their mother and her desire to lead her own life. The children are still grieving their father, but she is ready to explore a new relationship. Virginia recognizes this difference and says, “he had a very beautiful death and I can accept his death so well and I think that bothers my kids .” This new relationship is part of the conflict that began when she started developing interests of her own. The lack of communication that she experiences with her children exacerbates this conflict. They have withdrawn from her and she tells me, “I’ve lost not only a husband, but my kids too.” Virginia describes this time of her life as a “struggle with myself.” She is hopeful for her future, but aware of the difficulties she faces.

Summary

Virginia constructs her childhood with stories and narratives of habitual physical and sexual abuse by her father. She successfully fought off one uncle’s advances when she was seven, but her parents did not listen to her and she did not gain confirmation of

her experience or assurance of her safety. Consequently her stories of warding off the advances of her uncles are told as stories of failures: failure of validation, failure to become secure from the sexual advances of her relatives.

Virginia responded to the abuse with silence and self-blame. Her parents ignored her initial account of her uncle's advances. Her father attempted to molest her and her mother did not keep her confidences. She did not tell either of them of the other incidents of abuse because she did not trust them. Virginia became silent about the abuse because there was "no one to talk to." This silence and subsequent isolation reverberated from her childhood through her marriage to her current life.

Virginia does not blame the men who abused her. She builds extended orientations and draws pictures of the conditions in her childhood, but reserves personal judgment. She implicates her parents in neglect and physical abuse, but does not criticize or blame them. Although the sexual advances by men in her family were pervasive, she assumes that it was her fault, i.e., she blames herself for attracting "that kind" of attention.

Virginia described her husband as a good and loving man. She also said, however, that he kept control rather than sharing it and she was not happy in the marriage. The abuse intruded into her sexual relationship when her husband's gestures and touches reminded her of her father. Thus she causally linked her husband to her father and withdrew from him. She tried to explain to her husband what the abuse meant to her and how it affected her, but he did not understand and could not talk to her. His failure to

communicate exacerbated the impact of his failing health in the last 10 years of their marriage. Thus the lack of communication and understanding, and the subsequent isolation and loneliness that Virginia experienced in childhood were repeated in her marriage.

Unlike Alice who sealed off her past in episodes as she told her story, Virginia organized her story in a series of temporal switchbacks moving from one past time to the present to another past time. These switchbacks are represented by the transcription numbers of the discourse units that focus on her marriage and the present. For example, after Virginia explained that her husband could not understand her, (page) she spoke for several minutes of her problems with her children and her new relationship. Then she returned to talk about her marriage and the past. Virginia not only switched back and forth in time across the narratives but she also switched from the past to the present within a narrative structure. For example, on page , she told a story about the time her father molested her. She moves back to present time in line , when she says that she still does not know why he stopped. Thus within narrative structures and narrative organization Virginia weaves her past and her present together as she tells her life story.

Virginia constructs her life story with these temporal shifts because problems from her past are part of her life now. She links the abuse in her past to her present in several ways. Her husband's gestures and touches reminded of the abuse by her father. She is still uncomfortable with the sexual attention from men because it reminds her of the abuse. Throughout Virginia's description of her marriage and her current life, she

pulls threads from the abuse in her childhood into the present. These threads include the of lack of communication and understanding and the subsequent isolation. These problems began in her childhood, were repeated in her marriage, and are evident in the current conflict with her children. Thus Virginia's narrative structures and structural organization of her life story reflect her understanding of her past and present as the threads that she traces to the abuse in her childhood are interwoven in her current struggles.

Virginia attempted to disclose the abuse, first to her parents and then to her husband, but she was not heard. Her parents ignored her account of her uncle's advances, and her husband did not understand the impact of the abuse on their marriage. With no one to hear her, she lost her voice. Thus Virginia, like Alice, is silent in her narratives and uses contextual detail rather than evaluative clauses to make her point. For example, she does not blame her parents for neglect or abuse. She does not say "I know this was wrong, I was hurt by this." Instead she constructs a picture of their abuse through contextual detail. She describes the causal conditions throughout her life by using circumstantial evidence. Although she takes responsibility, she does not assign it to those around her. She does not declare directly in the narratives how she feels, what she thinks. This silence in her stories that is represented by the lack of evaluative clauses reflects the loss of her voice.

Virginia's efforts to cope with the abuse began with learning to talk about the abuse. With the help of a friendly minister, she told her family about the abuse in 1981

when she was 43. Talking about the abuse has not been easy, nor has Virginia easily found her voice and said how she feels. For example, she has not told her children of the despair she felt that led to her recent suicide attempt. Virginia has frequently assumed the burden of communication, saying "I couldn't make him understand." If learning to speak requires practice in disclosing one's feelings and thoughts, a receptive audience is necessary for finding one's voice.

Virginia tells a story of personal evolution. Despite the abuse and neglect that she experienced as a child, she has found love and developed the ability to care for others. She and her husband adopted and raised a young cousin as well as their five children. All of their children at this time live productive and satisfied lives. She describes them as "pretty educated and [they] have good jobs and um know how to take care of themselves." She cares deeply for her grandchildren and has struggled throughout the conflict with her children to maintain her relationship with them.

Virginia attempts now to create a new life and she struggles with the threads from the past. When asked if the abuse is still an issue in her life she replied: "When ever I don't feel good, um whenever I'm depressed, um all that stuff comes forward. (5) You never can push it away. (3)" In the past spring, troubled by the recent conflict with her children, she attempted suicide. Despite these continuing problems she is cautiously hopeful about her future. She is exploring new interests, and a new relationship as she tries to build a different life. She is in her second childhood, she claims, with another chance to learn to speak and be heard. She is attempting now to find her voice and

communicate with her children. Her attempts have had some success. For example, when a daughter and son-in-law refused to let her see her granddaughter, Virginia “finally went over and had a heart to heart with them and told them they weren’t being very fair and after that they did get *somewhat* better.”

Virginia switches between her past and present as she tells her story because problems from her past continue to unravel her present. Her voice is lost in the narratives and she uses contextual details to make her point. She tells her life story as a struggle for understanding, a struggle to find her voice, and learn to speak. This is a glimpse of a life in progress, but the threads from the abuse, particularly communication problems, still threaten her future. Will she resolve these problems and weave the threads into a different pattern? These are the questions she faces as she explores her life.

Chapter 5
A Triptych of Lives
Belinda: Reclaiming Her Life

Introduction

Belinda, 67 years old, has recently remarried and the interview took place in their new apartment. I missed the first three or four minutes of the interview because of taping problems. She began her story with some difficulty and stopped, not certain if she wanted the words to “stay in the apartment.” Although I offered to cancel the interview or reschedule it, she said that she wanted to go ahead with it. She began again and then stopped and said it was too hard to start from the beginning, she would just begin when she was nine, an age that has great importance in her life. Belinda did not tell her story chronologically. She began by talking about the abuse and her first husband’s suicide that occurred when their daughter was nine. She then described through a variety of narratives, moving back and forth in time, a “second” life that began in her late 40’s. In this part of her life she described how she coped with the abuse, and how it affected her. She finished the interview with descriptions of her recent marriage. In reconstructing her story I have placed her accounts of the effects of the abuse before her stories of coping with the effects. Transcription numbers indicate the original order of the telling.

The Age of Nine

Belinda said that the abuse began when she was about five and her father began to fondle her vaginally. She then told this habitual narrative about turning nine:

1	8	AB	<i>anyway</i> I was talking about the age of nine
2	9	AB	that’s when it escalated

3	9	OR	but when I was nine
4	9	CA	<i>my father always</i> had this
5	10	CA	then he started you know actually uh vaginally actually
	10		doing you know [um hmm] actually whatever you call it
6	11	CA	and he would say um
7	11	OR	and I would always have to be in his bedroom
8	12	CA	and um he would um and it wouldn't matter this
9	12	OR	and my mother didn't care
10	13	OR	this would be if he worked swing shift
11	13	OR	and this would be in the morning
12	13	OR	if he worked evening shift you know, or day shift
13	14	OR	it would be in the ah ev af the evening
14	14	OR	at the house
16	14	OR	and we only had a two bedroom house
16	15	EV	but what I remember the age of nine stands out
17	15	EV	and it stands very traumatic for me through all the years

Belinda uses “always, would, always would,” to emphasize the frequency of the abuse that escalated when she was nine. She begins to say in line 4 that she had to repeat a dialogue that was part of the abuse. She breaks off that thought, and tries to say what happened when she was nine, but hesitates and falters, indicating how difficult this story is to tell. She tries unsuccessfully to find the word intercourse, but can not say that word. She tries again to relate his part of the dialogue, but breaks her sentence. She backs up and tells where the abuse occurred. She tries to name what he did to her, but hesitates and falters again. She suggests her mother’s culpability in the abuse. Her mother did not care that she was always in her father’s bedroom, or she knew what happened in the bedroom and did not care. The abuse occurred constantly whether her father worked days, afternoon, or night. She describes the smallness of their house, and implies this question: how could the abuse have been a secret in such a small space. She does not resolve this

narrative, but simply reflects that the age of nine, was defined by trauma. She changes to present tense, nine years old still brings back the trauma of the abuse.

Belinda stammers and hesitates as she tells this story. Some words are too difficult to say and she breaks off sentences. She struggles to name the abuse, but can not (lines 4, 5, 6, 8). She hints twice at her mother's complicity in the abuse, but does not accuse her. She attempts twice to describe the dialogue that was part of the abuse, but breaks off each time. In this way the difficulty of telling her story are indicated by her grammatical construction and structural gaps.

Belinda's father made her answer questions as part of the abuse. He would ask how old was she when intercourse began. He made her say this so often that the age of nine years assumed tremendous importance. She continues to describe the abuse with another habitual narrative:

1	23	OR	then it went on
2	23	OR	I mean it was just like
3	23	CA	he did it in the evening
4	23	CA	and in the morning
5	23	EV	and it was just
6	24	CA	he'd keep me in bed
7	24	CA	and I'd be late for school and stuff
8	24	EV	like he was just gross it uhh
9	25	EV	I mean it was just awful
10	25	CA	and I he um he um he made me he lay beside him,
11	25	CA	I was of course his favorite he said,
12	26	CA	and he would tell me all these <i>weird things</i> about you
	26		know oh he had sex ..
13	27	CA	he used awful language, you know,
14	27	EV	just awful, just <i>creepy</i> language,
15	29	CA	I had to listen to this <i>weird</i> stuff [um hmm]
16	29	CA	and I couldn't do,
17	29	CA	I just had to lay there
18	30	CA	and listen to it you know

Again Belinda uses a narrative genre that emphasizes repetition. The abuse, which included verbal as well as sexual gestures, disrupted home and school. Belinda indicts her father with this narrative. She articulates her feelings with the evaluative clauses, and uses words like gross, awful, weird, creepy, to justify her claim that her father was not a normal man. She uses sarcasm in line 11, to show her awareness of his manipulation and dishonesty. She begins to say that she could not do anything to resist (line 16), but breaks off her sentence and concludes that she just had to endure it.

The age of nine is pivotal in Belinda's life, connecting the time when the abuse by her father escalated to the time to her husband's suicide. The link between these two events is her daughter's ninth birthday. Belinda describes what happened then:

1	30	OR	anyway, <i>nine</i> , when my daughter turned nine
2	30	EV	I just went <i>crazy</i>
3	31	EV	and I knew how old a nine year old was finally <i>oh I just</i>
4	31	OR	and then I was having trouble with my husband,
5	32	OR	my husband committed suicide
6	32	OR	when he was 37, and I was 35
7	33	OR	and I was just about 35 when my daughter turned nine
8	43	OR	the thing that happened then was I felt like that I
9	44	OR	we went to UC
10	44	OR	and my husband was an optometrist
11	44	OR	and he'd found this school we were
12	45	OR	I supported him all through undergraduate at the
	45		University of Colorado
13	46	OR	then he went to school
14	46	OR	we waited five years to have children anyway
15	46	OR	so we were at this dance
16	47	CA	and I thought I <i>liked</i> somebody
17	47	OR	but I I'd also been forced to go to Sunday school when I
	47		was little [um hmm]
18	48	CA	"you gonna go those Sunday school rain or shine god
	48		damn it (expletive) on and on" blah blah
19	49	CA	I had to go to Sunday school when I was little

20 49 CA you damn kids are gonna get out of the house
 50 and go to Sunday school every Sunday” you know
 21 50 CA so you know he *made* us go to Sunday school
 22 51 EV so I got raised with all this thing about guilt
 23 51 EV and going to hell if you’re committing sins
 24 52 EV and I knew what was going on at home
 25 52 EV I had I always had this *dichotomy* you know
 26 53 EV always trying to be a good little girl
 27 53 EV and always feeling like what I’m doing is a bad little girl
 53 you know kind of thing [um hmm]
 28 54 OR so what was I saying oh, so anyway
 29 54 CA I thought
 30 54 OR when my husband just before he committed suicide
 31 55 CA that I liked this person
 32 55 CA and I thought well if I told my husband
 33 56 EV then it would be all right [um hmm]
 34 56 EV well of course it wasn’t you know
 35 56 CA he then we just I was the worst person in the world you
 57 know on and on and on he just
 36 57 EV it was terrible
 37 57 OR and so anyway when he commits suicide
 38 58 EV it’s like it’s all my *fault*
 39 58 EV but then I knew it wasn’t
 40 63 EV my husband could not accept failure
 41 64 EV so I think that had a lot to do with it
 42 64 R but in the end it seemed like it was
 43 64 CO so I’ve always lived with the guilt that you know what I
 65 told him

Belinda tells a long, complex story about her husband’s suicide that occurred after their daughter turned nine. This is really a story within a story, for there is a story about her childhood embedded in the middle of the narrative. Two past times are represented, her marriage and her childhood. The link between the stories is the age of nine: what happened to her when she was nine and what happened when she saw her daughter at the same age. She begins the story by saying that she went crazy when her daughter turned nine because she could see for the first time how vulnerable that age is. Finally, she knew

how young she had been when the abuse by her father escalated. Belinda starts to say how difficult this time was but breaks off her sentence. She begins then to tell the story of her husband's suicide. She starts to describe the precipitating incident of the suicide with line 8. Then she breaks away in lines 9-14 to provide background information that supports her claim that she was a good wife and supported her husband's education. She returns to her story of the suicide (line 15-16) and describes what happened. She breaks into the story again in line 17 and tells an embedded story to illustrate her knowledge of right and wrong. When she was a little girl her father forced her to attend Sunday school. She assumes his voice and words in lines 18 and 20 to show his anger and abuse. Religion created a confusion and guilt for her because she always wanted and tried to be a good girl, but she knew that what her father did to her was wrong.

Belinda reorients her original story with line 28 and begins to explain what happened. She stresses the temporal order of the events. She told her husband of her attraction to another man and then he committed suicide. Belinda links the religious training to the suicide: by "confessing" to her husband she would not be guilty of deception. In this way she claims that her intentions were good. Her husband condemned and blamed her. "It was terrible," she says. When he committed suicide she wondered if this incident precipitated his death, and blamed herself. She vacillates in the rest of the story between blaming herself and recognizing that his death was not her fault. Although she realizes that his business failures contributed to his suicide, she resolves the story by taking responsibility for his death. She returns to the present with a change in verb tense.

She has always lived with the guilt of “what I told him.” Belinda breaks her sentence off, because she can not repeat out loud the thought that what she told him may have killed him.

Belinda backs up, hesitates, and falters throughout the narrative, indicating again through grammar and structural gaps the difficulty of telling her story. She begins one story and then breaks it to tell another, fracturing the structure of the narrative. She repeats the phrase, “you know,” six times, asking for understanding. She breaks away from the story twice to embed contextual information and another story as a basis for her claim of innocence. She falters repeatedly in line 35 as she tries to describe her husband’s anger and blame. Belinda’s understanding of her husband’s death is fragmented by guilt and this fragmentation is mirrored in her narrative structure.

When her daughter turned nine, Belinda recognized her own vulnerability at that age and did not want her daughter to have a father. “I didn’t really care if he died or not,” she said. She does not know now if those feelings somehow contributed to the suicide, but they are part of the legacy of guilt that she still feels.

She offered an explanation about her husband’s suicide:

1	65		he also tried to cancel his life insurance
2	66		so I wouldn’t have any money to raise the children with
3	66	proposition	I mean it really was kind of,
4	66		but he died like a day before it was up
5	67		before it was the grace period was still there or something
6	67		and what else did he oh he died, he killed himself on June
7	68		12th and on 13th we would have been married 16 years or
	68		17 years,
8	69		or something like that,
9	69		he must have picked the day I don’t know
10	69		but that’s what he did,

11 70 the next day we would have been married one more year
 12 70 I think it was 16 years
 13 71 it seems like a long time then at then to be married

This is an explanation without a proposition. Belinda explains that her husband attempted to cancel his life insurance shortly before he killed himself. He did this on purpose, she claims, to leave her without money for their family. She starts to propose what kind of action this is, but stops because she can not say the words. What else did he do, she asks? He ended his life the day before their anniversary. Belinda tries to say what kind of man her husband is, but can not find the words. Instead, she uses his gestures to reveal him as an angry, vindictive man who tried to deprive his children of support after his death.

She then tells this story about a discovery that her family recently made:

1 84 OR but what I we found out recently
 2 85 OR my husband who was *so* upset
 3 85 OR when I told him cause I felt like I liked somebody, the
 85 church and everything
 4 86 OR I I couldn't have done anything like that you know
 86 I couldn't have, [um hmm]
 5 87 OR and um we find out well I found out earlier
 6 87 OR that my husband might have had another child
 7 88 OR and I thought it was somebody else's child,
 8 89 OR he had a receptionist that he liked
 9 89 OR and I thought maybe it was her baby
 10 90 CA then my son, I I write a lot and he's he saw this
 90 that they had a brother
 11 90 OR and I thought it was um so and so
 12 91 CA so my younger son went looking
 13 91 CA and he went and called an old friend
 14 92 CA and he said "I don't know if you have a brother, but you
 92 have a half sister"
 15 93 CA then we found out
 16 93 CA that my husband had had this *baby* with my very best
 93 *friend* a month a year before my youngest son was born

17	94	EV	now doesn't this but it's all tied up,
18	94	R	anyway now we they have a half sister, Kim that they see
	94		once in a while,
19	95	EV	I don't know why he treated me so terribly
20	95	EV	you know he just treated me like I was the worst person in
	96		the world
21	96	EV	how could I ever <i>do</i> that
22	96	R	and here he already had this baby
23	97	CO	so anyway (she laughs) that's the story of my life, it's like
	97		just trauma, trauma

Belinda again struggles to tell a story about her husband. She falters and stumbles as she mentions her attraction to another man and reiterates repeats her innocence. She then reveals her husband's secret: while still married he had a child with Belinda's best friend. Although she resolves the story, she can not resolve her husband's treatment of her. How could he accuse her of infidelity, when he had already had a baby with her best friend? She laughs at the irony. "How could I ever do that," she says, meaning I never did anything as bad as he did. She summarizes not only this story but also her life in the coda: it's just another trauma, that's what her life has been.

In telling this story about her husband's infidelity and dishonesty, Belinda explains some of her ambivalent feelings towards him. She does not judge him but rather tells a story that contrasts their behaviors. The structure of this story again underlies Belinda's understanding. She breaks her story, moving back to trace the clues that lead to their discovery. She mixes together, in line 3, her confession and the church, and then repeats her innocence. She hesitates repeatedly. She interrupts the story and changes to the present tense in line 19, indicating that she still does not understand why her husband was

so cruel to her. Her life has been nothing but trauma, she claims, and that trauma fragments narrative coherence as she struggles to tell her story.

Belinda also explains how the abuse affected her husband and how he treated her:

1	105	I do remember when I was married to first married
2	105	that I wished that I that part between my legs didn't exist
	106	you know
3	106	I wished that I didn't have that
4	106	and then I'd be OK
5	106	cause my husband would say "Oh you're used, or you're
	107	like a used car" or something like that,
6	107	although he's the only person I ever had sex with you
	108	know all the time
7	108	until I became a widow
8	108	and then I so anyway
	109	[did he say that about um what did he mean by that?]
9	109	in the event that, he knew I told him about my Dad
10	110	and he knew that
11	110	and he just thought you know
12	110	it <i>always</i> kind of always kind of never kind of (p) got
	111	used to it I think
13	111	and it probably I I you know I've heard it even uh not too
	111	good you know,
14	112	probably not a good thing to marry somebody like that
	112	I don't know you know
15	112	but anyway he let me know it
16	113	I was certainly imperfect, impure,
17	113	I was he called me stupid all the time he he was very
18	114 proposition	it was very it was the kind of a marriage where he needed
	114	to be feel superior and I needed to feel bad
19	115	and I really I got to a time when I couldn't even talk
20	115	it was after my daughter was born
21	115	but finally I got brave
22	116	and I could talk a little bit more,
23	116	now I talk like I you know like I've never had a problem
24	117	I talk too much (she laughs)

Her sexuality was a burden because her husband taunted her about the incest. She uses his words to show, rather than to say, how cruel he was. She falters repeatedly in

lines 8 through 14 and breaks off her sentences as she tries to explain that her husband could not accept her because she was a victim of incest. She falters again trying to say that it was probably was not good for him to marry her, "somebody like that." She hesitates and asks again for understanding. She does not blame either her father for perpetrating the abuse, or her husband for his lack of compassion or understanding. Although her husband was emotionally and verbally abusive to her, she takes some of the responsibility for the quality of the marriage. "I got to a time" she says, implying a change for the worse, when she could not even talk. However, she became brave and she began to talk. She laughs and implies change, she talks too much now.

Belinda has indicated throughout this part of her life story the emotional impact that the abuse still has for her. She hesitated and faltered as she tried to describe the sexual abuse by her father and her husband's suicide. The guilt she experiences from her husband's death still fractures her understanding, and she moves back and forth, asserting her innocence and then expressing feelings of responsibility. She illustrates her husband's infidelity, but does not reproach him for his cruelty. She resolves the events in her stories, but the emotional impact of the events is not resolved. As a consequence she asks repeatedly throughout the narratives and explanations, how could this happen, how could he treat her so cruelly.

The Legacy of the Abuse

Belinda talks about the effects of the abuse throughout the interview, weaving narratives and explanations about the abuse with those that describe the ways that she has

coped with it. She traces to the abuse life-long depression, self-blame, loss of family, opportunities for work and self-expression.

One of the problems she continues to struggle with is that she does not think that people trust her. These feelings started “in little ways” but now they affect her in “all kinds of ways.” She told this hypothetical narrative that illustrates:

1	328	EV	I didn't think people trusted me you know
2	328	EV	I didn't I always I didn't think people trusted me,
3	329	EV	and I didn't know how they could trust me I don't know
4	330	OR	it it started when um in little ways,
5	332	CA	I think if I go to the Bon Marche
6	332	CA	they check on me
7	332	EV	because they think I'm going to be stealing things [um hmm] you know,
8	333	CA	so I have be real careful what I do (she laughs)
9	334	EV	really it's true,
10	334	EV	I know it sounds pure paranoia 334 [oh yes, I know]
11	334	EV	but I know it comes from the the abuse
12	335	EV	I know it comes from that I don't and I
13	335	CA	now I'm more aware of it and I try not to, and I I
14	336	EV	it's also true that what you think becomes reality 336 and I can see that
15	336	CA	I I I've thought about it enough that now I think that
16	337		everybody thinks it you know,
17	337	CA	so it it comes up,
18	337	EV	but that's true though I I
19	338	CO	and that's that's the the residual
20	338	CO	or that's the main thing I have left,
21	339	CO	I feel like people can't trust me

Belinda falters as she tries to give an example of how the abuse still affects her.

She reiterates that she feels that people do not trust her. She did not know how they could trust her, she repeats in line three. She offers a hypothetical situation and asks for my reassurance. Although this may sound like paranoia, it's true, it's how she feels. She

begins to say that she more is aware of these feelings now but breaks off and does not say that she tries not to let them bother her. She falters again (line 13). She is aware that thoughts can become reality, but the problem is that these thoughts have become so pervasive in her life that they now are her reality. That is the legacy of the abuse, she says, using the present tense of the verb.

This hypothetical narrative illustrates the extent of the self-blame that Belinda feels. She knows that people do not really think that she is a thief, yet she still has these feelings. When asked if she thought that people could see something about her, she replied “yes, oh yes.” She went on, “I always think that people will think the worst of me. I never have thought they would think the best of me.” In this narrative Belinda illustrates how the self-blame becomes internalized. She describes the abuse as if it left a residue, i.e., as if it left visible marks by which other people would condemn her. In this sense, the self-blame became part of the low self-esteem that she described feeling. In this narrative low self-esteem is not based on competency, but is a deeper sense of being wrong. It is as if her “self” is wrong, and is to blame.

Belinda describes her struggles with low self-esteem. “I think it took me a long time to find I even had a brain, really I felt dumb most of my life.” She describes in this story how her lack of confidence affected her work in college:

1	348	OR	and there was a time when I was in school
2	349	OR	when I might have gotten a little above a B average,
3	350	CA	I made sure I didn't get above a B average
4	350	EV	I I [oh] (she cries)
5	350	EV	I've been very terrible really,
6	351	EV	I suppose that's probably the worst,
7	351	EV	isn't that terrible?

8 351 [I think that's not terrible, but it's very understandable]
 8 351 EV (she cries again)

Belinda recounts a time in her late 40's when she was in college. She could have done well, but did not. She evaluates this story directly, not verbally, through tears. Isn't this terrible she asks, and cries again at my response that it is understandable, not terrible.

I asked if the abuse had affected her sexually, and she gave this explanation:

1 682 oh I think so, I I think so
 2 682 proposition I've um I've never liked it, never liked it,
 3 682 never wanted to do it more than five minutes, you know,
 4 683 and I told Robert the other day
 5 683 I don't think we would have stayed together that long if
 6 684 he he's not very sexual either, [um hmm]
 7 684 so we've managed to stay together,
 8 685 I don't think anybody would have stayed together
 685 14 years
 9 685 if they wanted any kind of a sexual life,
 10 688 I did have I have had when I was
 11 688 not when I was a widow
 12 688 but when I was divorced from my second husband
 13 689 I met a man, he was a doctor
 14 689 and I met another man,
 15 690 but if I hadn't met those two men
 16 690 I don't think I would have known what a sexual
 17 691 experience could be, [OK]
 18 691 so I feel very fortunate
 19 691 I was with both of them just six months, [um hmm]
 20 692 but I'm *aware* of what it could be
 21 692 and I'm very grateful for that, [um hmm]
 22 693 *very grateful* for that, very very grateful, very you know,
 23 693 so I'm aware of that what it could be, what it should be,
 24 694 and maybe I have the potential to be that if I you know
 25 694 but I I would rather *not* be, it seems like
 26 695 anyway I'm with Robert

Sex was something to be endured, it was not something that she wanted to enjoy.

She repeats a conversation she had with her new husband to show the similarity of their

feelings. She falters again. She knows what sex *could* and she is grateful. She could enjoy sex, but she is not sure that she wants to do that. She hesitates and claims this as her choice, sex is not part of her marriage.

Belinda said that her ability to work was also affected by the abuse and she did not work as much as she might have. She said, "I didn't work you know, I only worked as little as I could, as I had to. That's actually the truth. I didn't, after I got my nursing degree I hardly ever worked." At the age of 59 she quit work, returned to college and got a four year degree. As a consequence of beginning to work late in life and working only part time, she has only social security, and lived in HUD housing until her recent marriage.

Belinda attributes other lost opportunities to the abuse. She described talents that she did not develop, such as swimming and dancing. She said "I've always been real good in school. Maybe I would have truly become a teacher and been a *good teacher*, you know. I feel like that's what I should have been." Her life would have been different, without the abuse, she said. "I would have felt more worthy. I think I would have felt it was OK to be intelligent." She summed up the effects of the abuse on her life, "Yes it has affected me. It certainly stunted me in every way I think, *every single way*."

Coping with the Abuse

At the time of her husband's suicide, Belinda sought counseling. For the first time she talked about the incest, and began a life long process of unraveling the effects of the abuse. In this story she describes the beginning of that process:

1 98 OR I did go to my first psychiatrist

2	98	OR	it was a psychiatrist and I and I
3	99	CA	when I told him I just sobbed
4	99	CA	I couldn't even get it out
5	99	CA	I just sobbed and sobbed and sobbed
6	100	CA	and then next time I talked with somebody
7	100	CA	I sobbed and sobbed and sobbed
8	100	CA	and the next time I talked with somebody
9	101	CA	I didn't sob you know
10	101	R	like I could get it out

Belinda tells a simple but very effective story that illustrates consequences of talking about the abuse. Although she does not include evaluative clauses, she demonstrates clearly what it meant to her to tell her story. Belinda tells this story with little hesitation or faltering, and repeats the word sobbing with decreasing frequency to emphasize the effectiveness of talking about the abuse.

Belinda was widowed at the age of 35 and married again when she was 40. That marriage lasted five years, but ended after a two year separation. During this marriage she obtained a nursing degree and began to work as a nurse. Although she had previously sought counseling, Belinda describes an epiphany that was a turning point in her understanding of the abuse. Until her early 40's she did not realize that the abuse had affected her in any way. She thought that her sister, who was also abused by their father, "was the one that was hurt the worst by it. I didn't think that I was hurt by it." Her sister had sought help for the effects of the abuse long before Belinda had. "She's always been the one that was hurt the worst, she can't do anything because of my Dad." Belinda told this story:

1	137	OR	one day I was washing the dishes
2	137	OR	we still lived in the same house which was out here in
	138		this area

3 138 CA and it *came* to me
 4 138 OR I was washing dishes
 5 138 CA that I really had been hurt worse than my sister
 6 139 CA all of a sudden I realized that / that I really had been hurt
 139 worse than my sister
 7 140 CA it just came like that
 8 140 EV and I I do think I was,
 9 140 EV I I think I was hurt a lot worse than my sister in a lot of
 141 ways
 10 141 EV because for one thing I never talked about it you know
 11 141 EV I thought that it was all my fault

Belinda suddenly realized that it was not just her sister who was hurt by the abuse, she was affected by it too. She emphasizes with repetition the importance of this realization and returns to the present tense in lines 8 and 9: she still believes she was hurt more by the abuse than her sister. She offers a reason: she had never talked about the abuse because she assumed that it was her fault.

She then explains

1 142 proposition and I think that one of the things that maybe *saved* me is
 142 that I thought that it *was* my fault
 2 143 and she's always been "if it hadn't been for our Dad I
 143 could do this,
 3 143 if it hadn't been for our Dad I could do that,
 4 144 if it hadn't been for him I could,"
 5 144 I never got into that
 6 144 I never got into uh saying if it hadn't been for him I could
 145 do this
 7 145 I just always thought it was my fault,
 8 146 I mean I never got into that kind of an excuse for myself
 9 146 I know she said "oh I can't take care of my fingernails
 10 147 because once he made me file his fingernails
 11 147 and I can't *stand* to look at fingernails anymore"
 12 148 I never did that, I don't know [um hmm] I
 13 148 so I think that saved me in the long run,
 13 149 I don't know if it did or not,
 15 149 but as I look back I think maybe that saved me

Unlike her sister, Belinda did not claim the abuse as a reason that she could not do something. Instead, she did what she wanted to do. She suggests that her life has been different, less constrained by the abuse than her sister's life has been. Blame is part of the guilt she felt for her husband's suicide, and part of the low self-esteem she has felt throughout her life. Yet blaming herself for the abuse has also helped her, she maintains, to step out of a victim's role. She draws a comparison to her sister who has always blamed their father for things that she (the sister) could not do. Belinda "never got into that kind of an excuse for myself." She assumed the abuse was her fault, and she had no one to blame. Therefore she had to do the things that she wanted to do.

Belinda described a four year period in her life when she sought help from a new therapist. "Then something *happened* that helped me" she said, describing the therapy. "It seems like when I went to him and I didn't really talk about it that much, but he helped me in lots of different ways." She told this story that describes what she learned then:

1	172	CA	I don't know um I started doing a relaxation tech,
2	173	OR	he had me do this, technique, relax and then one arm and
3	173	OR	then focus on another and so on,
4	173	CA	and he had me doing some yoga,
5	174	CA	and then I even would meditate
6	174	EV	and I don't think, oh I didn't meditate, I'd just relax,
	174		relax.
7	175	EV	I don't think you can relax your body, it just seems like a
	175		meditation [um hmm]
8	176	EV	you're into it without realizing
9	176	CA	so I kind of got into <i>that</i>
10	176	R	and I've meditated ever since then
11	177	R	I don't, now I do it twice a day,
12	177	OR	but in those days you know, I'd do it a day for three
			months
13	177	OR	and then I wouldn't do it for three months then I would
	178		do it again

14 178 CO but I think truth comes to you when you meditate
179 when you're real quiet

With the help of the therapist, Belinda learned techniques that she still practices regularly. She emphasizes in the coda the importance of what she learned, truth came to her when she was quiet.

As the same time that she began this therapy, Belinda began a journey of self discovery. She tells this story:

1	149	OR	I went to um this counselor
2	150	OR	and I talked about everything
3	150	OR	but what I did then it was like I dropped out of life,
4	151	OR	my children didn't forgive me for a long time in fact
5	151	OR	maybe I had a nervous breakdown I don't know,
6	151	OR	I'd just got divorced,
7	152	OR	I'd been a widow,
8	152	OR	my husband had committed suicide, you know
9	153	OR	I was trying to get over this trauma, this sexual thing, just
	153		trying to
10	153	EV	so I just became like a bag lady
11	154	CA	I mean I just wandered all over
12	154	OR	with this pack on my back and a little note pad
13	156	CA	I worked like oh I worked right down here at a nursing
	156		home,
14	158	OR	in three weeks I worked seven days, I guess
15	158	OR	I didn't work very much,
16	158	CA	I just wandered all over
17	159	OR	cause my children were still getting social security and
	159		you know their Dad,
18	160	CA	I I just wandered all over, all up and down the waterfront
19	162	CA	just walked and walked and walked
20	162	EV	and I would feel like
21	162	EV	I've never been told that I had a second personality
22	163	EV	but it seemed like when I <i>did</i> that
22	163	EV	that I would say to myself "I'm really here"
23	164	EV	like you know a part of me was <i>coming</i> , "I'm here all day
	164		today" you know
24	165	EV	I would say things like that to myself
25	165	CA	and and I would go into some places like

26 166 EV and I I'd never let myself go to the beach
 27 166 CA and then I'd go to the beach
 28 166 CA and then I'd almost *cry* because I loved the beach you
 167 know
 29 167 EV it's like *finally*, I can go to the beach
 30 167 OR and I used to not sew, well I did too sew,
 31 168 CA but I'd go into fabric stores
 32 168 EV and it seemed like something that would touch me that I
 168 really liked
 33 169 EV that I hadn't let myself like, that I liked, you know, and I
 169 found out
 34 169 OR so I did that for four years,
 35 170 CA I did I actually wandered around for four years
 36 170 R and then I sort of came *out of it*,
 37 170 R I started working a little more and more
 38 171 R and I met Robert as I was coming *out of it*,
 39 171 OR I was like 51 or 2,
 40 172 CO but because of *that* I I've *changed*

Belinda, in her late forties, dropped out of life. She lists the precipitating circumstances, and asks did she have a nervous breakdown? Although she describes herself as a bag lady, wandering the city, she worked as a nurse, a job that allowed her a limited work schedule. When she was not working, she wandered the waterfront and beaches. She repeats the word, walking, as if she did this endlessly. The words she said to herself, "I'm really here, I'm here all day," imply that she was just waking up to the world and to her self. During this time she learned to draw, and kept journals. She discovered things that she had denied herself in the past. She spent four years "wandering" and then she "came out of it." She came out changed: she worked more, she met the man she would later marry.

Belinda describes a journey of wandering and experiencing, a process of becoming herself. She characterized these four years as a "step that I had to take." She learned to

experience the pleasure of beauty, of sensuous things. It was as if she had been going one way, she said, and then started going the opposite way. "It's like a it was like I had a childhood, I never had a childhood. But it was like I had a childhood and I just was carefree." As a result of her wandering, she "finally came to *myself*, what I *was*, or what I *am*, whatever I am."

As a result of this journey, Belinda forgave her father for the sexual abuse. I asked when she began to think of forgiveness, and she said "it would have to have been after I was um wandered around that town, it wasn't before that. I don't even think the concept of forgiving ever came into my mind." I asked her to talk to me about what forgiveness meant to her, and she responded with this explanation:

1	399		it's slow it was slow
2	400		and it was like um I had to come to terms with the
	400		forgiving too,
3	400		like I had to I could forgive him
4	401		but that didn't mean I had to be friends with him
5	401		didn't mean I had to have him over for dinner
6	401	proposition	just means I had to forgive him, [um hmm]
7	402		so I kind of came to terms with <i>that</i> ,
8	402		it's slow, it was slow [um hmm]
9	403		but I know I wrote them a letter,
10	403		I still have it someplace,
11	403		I wrote him a long letter,
12	415		I just wrote it long hand
13	416		and I know it's quite large letters, very <i>firm</i> letters you
	416		know,
14	416		but I did finally write a letter
15	416		but that didn't do it all either you know
16	417		I but I did say it
17	417		but I it just came in steps,
18	417		like I <i>had</i> to accept it in little steps
19	418		didn't matter what he did one way or not, you know
20	418		it was more like me accepting it you know [um hmm]
21	419		but I could forgive him,

22	419	like it was something, you have to forgive
23	420	and I used to say that St. Francis prayer daily for years,
24	420	“to be forgiven you have to forgive” you know
25	421	and “to love, to be loved you have to love” you know
26	422	and “to give to receive you have to give” you know
27	422	so that probably saying that prayer,
28	422	I don’t say that prayer anymore,
29	423	but that probably helped me,
30	423	but I’ve said that prayer for years and years.
31	424	Anyway I knew I had to do it
32	424	I think I knew I had to do it for <i>myself</i> ,
33	424	I knew I had to do it.
34	425	I knew I had to get <i>through</i> that

Forgiveness, Belinda says, is something *she had* to do (my emphasis). She repeats the words like a refrain (lines 2, 3, 6, 18, 31, 32, 33, and 34), emphasizing her urgency with repetition. It happened in small steps, she says twice. Forgiveness did not mean that she had to allow her father access into her life. Rather, the terms of the forgiveness included specific limits on that access. She did not have to become friends with him, nor did she have to let him into her home. In this gesture towards her father, she defined the terms, and she maintained control. Although Belinda is not Catholic, she repeats to me a prayer of forgiveness, a chorus that she repeated to herself for “years and years.” Forgiveness she says was not contingent on what her father did, it came from her. It was something she did for herself, not for her father.

Belinda told this story about her father’s background as part of her explanation of forgiveness:

1	405	OR	my father uh was born out of wedlock in Scotland years
	405		and years ago
2	406	OR	but he knew who his mother was
3	406	OR	and he knew who his father was
4	406	OR	and he was adopted

5	407	OR	but nevertheless when he was, in those days they called
	407		them bastards, you know
6	408	OR	and he was called that all his life
7	408	CA	and he and he said his grandmother would give everybody
	409		a penny when he was little,
8	409	CA	but they wouldn't give him one,
9	409	EV	because he was bad,
10	410	CA	so what my my father has said all his life is, "I've had a
	410		heavy cross to bear,
11	410	CA	no one has a heavier cross to bear than I have"
12	411	EV	you know (with sarcasm)
13	411	EV	that's he says all I I can remember all my life him saying
	411		that

Her father has told this story all of his life. He was born a bastard, and he was teased and treated cruelly by his own family. Her father talked all of his life of this victimization. He asserted in his story that he was treated unfairly for something he could not control. He claims, in a bid for pity, that he suffered more than others. Belinda evaluates his claim with her sarcasm. It is impossible to believe in his claim of injustice and to accept his appeal for pity because she knows what he did to his own children.

Belinda tells this story in the context of explaining what forgiveness of her father means. Throughout his life her father told a story of how he was victimized as a child, but he ignored the fact that he exploited and abused his own children. She, on the other hand, looked for a way to forgive him for his mistreatment of her. Belinda presents a very unflattering portrait of her father, and uses his words and his story to accomplish this task. His behavior as a father stands in stark contrast to the way that she has treated him.

Belinda emphasizes, as she tells her story, that forgiveness for her father comes in spite of what he does. Forgiveness does not change his behavior and he continues to be cruel and abusive. Belinda visited him several years ago and told this story:

1	209	AB	my Dad was <i>always</i> um putting people down,
2	209	OR	and he walks up to me where,
3	210	OR	and I actually saw him five days in a row
4	210	OR	which I'd never seen him ever in my whole life,
5	211	OR	even put my arms around him, all those things,
6	211	CA	and he said something to me like uh
7	212	OR	we were walking somewhere,
8	212	CA	he walked up close to me
9	212	CA	and "I know you didn't pass your nursing exam the first
	213		time you took it"
10	213	CA	I told him " <i>I did too pass that nurse exam</i> , I did too pass
	213		that"
11	219	EV	that's how my Dad was you know, [um hmm]
12	220	EV	<i>20 years later</i> he doesn't say "I'm glad you got to be a
	220		nurse"
13	221	CA	no, "I know you didn't pass that nurse exam"
14	221	R	you know so anyway that kind of set me back
15	222	R	it took me a while to forgive him for that (she laughs)
16	222	CO	but I finally did.

Her father always put others down, she says in the introduction. She describes her visit and her attempts to be affectionate. She draws an innocent picture of a daughter walking with her father. Then she repeats what he said to her, as if it is the only thing he said. He meant to hurt her, she claims, when he said "you didn't do well, you're not smart enough." Belinda points out what her father could have said, and her words contrasts sharply with his and reveal that he is not proud of her, but rather is cruel to her. She resolves this story in the last two lines. It set her back, but in time, she laughs, she forgave him.

Belinda tells this story to contrast her kindness to his cruelty. In telling these stories she underscores the point that she made earlier, that forgiveness is not for her father, it does not change him. "Forgiveness is for me," she said.

When asked what forgiveness gave her, Belinda explained:

1	425	I I suppose as I sit here
2	426	I feel a level of peaceness inside me peacefulness
3	426	I I think I had to get <i>through</i> it
4	426	proposition and forgive it in order to feel any peace or any
5	427	or to be forgiven myself
6	427	and you know we all have to be forgiven in different
	428	levels and it
7	428	you have to forgive to be forgiven
8	428	I think I took that literally
9	429	so maybe there's lots of ways that I need to be forgiven
	429	too,
10	429	so I knew I had to get over that

In order to achieve peace, Belinda claims, she had to forgive her father. She does not say whether she sought forgiveness for the guilt from her husband's death, or other experiences in her childhood. She describes forgiveness in global terms. She needs to be forgiven in many ways, she says, and forgiving others is part of forgiving herself.

The Present

Belinda describes her life now at the end of the interview. She retired from nursing when she was 59. Although she had a two year nursing degree she wanted a four year degree, so after she retired, she earned a bachelor's degree in nutrition. Belinda emphasized the importance of this degree, "I've always wanted to have a four year degree and it was just like I was supposed to get it." She continued, "but it was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be too." Friends are important to her and she has made "a real

effort” to have them. She continued her relationship with Robert, whom she met at the end of her “wandering” days. They married shortly before this interview. He is seven years older than she is, and she married him because “I I it came right down to it, he needs me, you know.”

Belinda explains the effects of the abuse over the course of her life:

1	454	sometimes I think uh that I am, um as a child in
2	455	when I went to college it would be like a normal person
	455	going to college
3	456	only it was like my 50’s over there
4	456	I get married now five years later,
5	456	only it’s like a normal person getting married after they’re
	457	out of school
6	457	only I’m 67 you know,
7	457	it’s kind of like that it’s like,
8	458	proposition I I started over again
9	458	and I uh I know the forgiveness came in there [um hmm]
10	458	and it was a <i>healing</i> for me, oh yes
11	459	my life just started in a whole new direction definitely

The abuse robbed her of her childhood and delayed the rest of her life. Her wandering days were a second childhood and she started her life over then. She has done the things that normal women do, i.e., she has gone to college and been married. However, she has done these things later in life than is the norm: she finished college in her 50’s and recently married at the age of 67.

Forgiveness was part of getting well, she said, after that her life started in a whole new direction. Although she has been depressed much of her life, she experienced happiness during her “wandering days.” She said “I *loved* those days you know. I look back with great fondness on those days, very much it was, it’s a stability for me. It gives

me, maybe the way people look back on their childhood you know, [um hmm] with a happiness.” That happiness has continued. She described her life now, compared to the time before she wandered: “I think I’m happier now, I know I am, than I have ever been, light heartedness, you know.”

Summary

Belinda initially began to tell her life story without introductions of her family, place or time. Instead she plunged into her earliest memories of the sexual abuse by her father that began when she was about five. She stopped because it was too painful and difficult to begin at the beginning of the abuse and tell all of it. She chose instead to begin with the age of nine, an age that has great significance for her because it links the sexual abuse and her first husband’s suicide that occurred when she was 35.

The sexual abuse escalated to intercourse when Belinda was nine. That age assumed tremendous importance for Belinda because she was forced for years to repeat how old she was when intercourse began. When her daughter turned nine, it was as if she was a mirror through time and Belinda could see for the first time how young and innocent she had been. Seeing her daughter at nine she became aware of how much the abuse had hurt her.

The abuse left a devastating legacy of depression, sexual problems, low self-esteem, and lost opportunities. It stunted her she said “in every way I think, *every* single way.” Belinda’s narratives of the abuse signify the intense emotional impact that it still has for her. Thus as she talked about the abuse, she struggled to find words, like

intercourse, to describe her experience, but could not say them. She hesitated, faltered, and broke off her sentences trying to describe, 58 years later, what is still indescribable.

Belinda's first marriage repeated, albeit in a different form, the abuse that she experienced as a child. Her husband treated her terribly, she said. He ridiculed her and taunted her about the abuse by her father. He was dishonest and unfaithful. When she disclosed to him an attraction that she felt for another man, he berated her and accused her of infidelity although he had had a child with her best friend.

Belinda told two stories of her husband's suicide. In both these stories, cohesiveness is lost as she fractures her narrative structure by embedding them with contextual detail or another story in an attempt to show her innocence. She fractures these two stories because her understanding of this event is still fragmented and she vacillates between understanding that she is innocent and feeling guilty for his death. Thus the sexual abuse "blows" away her childhood and her first marriage repeats the abuse and "blows" away her young adulthood.

As a consequence of this fragmentation, Belinda constructs her life story as tale of two lives. Her first life includes the sexual abuse in her childhood and her first husband's suicide. Her second life is a tale of reclamation, and she recounts her efforts to cope with the abuse. She describes this process as a journey of becoming herself. Indeed, her account of the time from her husband's suicide when she was 35, until her recent marriage when she is 67, consists of her efforts to reclaim her life.

By the end of her “first life” Belinda had retreated into silence, losing her voice. She said “I couldn’t even talk, I mean literally I couldn’t talk. I really felt dumb and stupid, I couldn’t talk.” Consequently, learning to talk about the abuse was the first step in reclaiming her life. The first time she told someone about the abuse she spoke with great difficulty, but she did it again, and then again, until she could “get it out,” and talk about it. Belinda, over the years not only learned to talk about the abuse, she also regained her voice and learned to say how she feels and what she thinks. Her voice is clearly evident in her narratives which are more heavily evaluated than those of either Alice or Virginia. For instance, Belinda says, of her father and the abuse, “he was just gross,” “it was awful.” She says of her husband, “I don’t know why he treated me so terribly.”

Belinda spoke of coping with the abuse as an ongoing process that included at different times, therapy, steps from AA’s 12 step program, support groups, affirmations. “*I’ve done everything*” she says. The key to her second life, however, is a spiritual “journey,” the four years in her late 40’s. She emphasized the importance of these four years throughout the interview and descriptions of it abound with vivid imagery: she “wandered,” she “walked” in a different direction. It was like a second childhood, one that she never had, one that allowed her to have a different life. She “abandoned” her children during this time, she said, and worked infrequently so that she could spend her time on this journey. She learned techniques for relaxation and meditation, techniques that she still uses. She kept journals, learned to draw, learned to experience very simple, but very meaningful pleasures: walking on a beach, fabrics to sew. She describes this time

as a journey of learning who she was and becoming herself. As a result of this spiritual quest, she changed. She said, “finally [I] came to *myself*, what I *was*, or what I *am*, whatever I am.”

After this “journey,” she resumed her former roles, she worked more and met the man she would eventually marry. Now, however, her life is different. She had gone in one direction, she said, and now she went in another. Forgiveness illustrates the difference between her first and second lives. As a child, Belinda had to submit to the sexual abuse, there was nothing else she could do. In her marriage she retreated from her husband’s abuse into silence. In her new life she does not retreat, nor react. Instead, she became assertive in her relationship with her father in a way that defines their differences, she treats him differently than he treated her, she forgives him.

In practical terms, forgiveness for Belinda means that she tries to be kind to him. She writes him “nice little letters.” She stresses that forgiveness is for her, not for him. It is part of her change, it has not changed him at all. For example, she said “he called me and you know he said ‘I’ll do anything for you’ and I said ‘don’t ever call me on the phone again.’ But of course that didn’t happen, he still calls me on the phone (she laughs) so I’ll talk to him.” Belinda laughs at her father’s false promise, but sets limits on what he can do. Her kindness that is edged with control, forgiveness does not mean that she allows her father to disrupt or invade her life. She tells him, when she does not want to hear something, “I don’t want to hear about that.” Forgiveness brings her peace, and releases her from the pain of the past.

Belinda uses two stories to contrast the differences between her father and herself. She repeats a story that her father told over the years to elicit pity for the poor treatment he received as a child, the “heavy cross” he had to bear. He emphasizes his own victimization at the hands of others. She, however, tells a story that makes a claim that although her father has not changed, she has. In her story he continues to treat her cruelly, in spite of her kindness to him. Her story emphasizes her ability to forgive him, and to show him the compassion that she never received from him. The juxtaposition of these two stories contrasts the differences between them. Her story says in effect, he did this to me, but I am different, I did not do to him what he did to me.

Belinda also contrasts her “second” life, with her first husband. She is different now than he was. Her first husband always wanted to be something better than he was. “He wasn’t happy being a dentist, he wanted to have a ski resort, he wasn’t happy being a dentist, he wanted a computer thing” she said. Life for him was turmoil, “life wasn’t peaceful, with him one bit, not one bit.” Belinda on the other hand claims peace from her past, because she has learned to forgive those who hurt her. “In order to feel any peace or any or to be forgiven myself and you know we all have to be forgiven in different levels.” Thus she claims she is different from her husband, his life was turmoil, he did not know peace, but she has attained it through forgiveness.

Belinda makes a claim then for a “second life,” one that is different from her first life. This life began in her late ‘40’s with a second childhood. Now she has a voice and can speak. Although she did not receive care as a child, she has cared for her children,

and now has a comfortable and affectionate relationship with both her children and grandchildren. Her children did not understand her “journey,” when they were young, but they do now. Belinda returned to college in her late ‘50’s and earned a four year degree. She has friends, a husband she cares for, who cares for her. She actively takes care of her health and has an ongoing spiritual practice. She has a “normal” life and she has done things that other, “normal” women do, but she has done them later because her life, this “second life,” was delayed.

Although Belinda lays claim to a second life that is different from her first, the two are still connected by the residue of the abuse. She continues to struggle with feelings of shame from the abuse and feels that people do not trust her. She said “I’ve just tried to get over what ever garbage I had and I I’ve cleaned out some, you know. But I I it’s still there that paranoia stuff is still there yeah. But maybe it will go away. I try not to think of it, I try not to dwell on it, you know. I try to see myself as trustworthy, and you know all right and accepting you know so I try not to dwell on it.”

Belinda was sexually abused by her father, and then verbally and emotionally abused by her first husband. She was helpless to stop the abuse as a child and retreated into silence in her first marriage. Guilt from her husband’s suicide fragments her understanding of his death and her narratives of this part of her life are fractured by the repeated trauma. She has spent much of the rest of her life coping with the abuse and constructs her life as a story of reclamation. Of particular importance is the spiritual journey that she began in her late 40’s and that has allowed her a “second” life. She

regained her voice and has completed, years later, the tasks that other women complete in their 20's. Belinda treats her father with compassion and kindness, values she did not experience in her first life, but learned in her second one. She tells a story of acceptance, of herself and of others. The abuse extracted terrible costs throughout her life, yet Belinda tells a story of accomplishment despite the devastating abuse. She tells a tale of transcendence.

Chapter 6

Life Story Summary

The Stories and the Telling

Introduction

Bill Buford (1996) writes that stories “protect us from chaos.” They are “a fundamental unit of knowledge, the foundation of memory, essential to the way we make sense of our lives, the beginning, middle, and end of our personal and collective trajectories” (Buford, 1996, p. 12). These women told their life stories in response to my question, “Knowing that I’m interested in the experience of older women who were sexually abused as children, could you tell me your life story.” How does narrative analysis contribute to an understanding of the experience of women who were all sexually abused as children? How did they accomplish the task of telling their life stories? First, they not only told very different stories, as might be expected, but they also told their stories in very different ways. These ways of telling are part of their understanding of the abuse, i.e., *how* they told their story is *part* of their story. In this chapter I will compare the stories that they told and then discuss how the construction and telling of each woman’s life story underlies her understanding of the impact of child sexual abuse in her life.

The Stories

The Abuse

What are the similarities and differences in their experiences? All three women experienced incest, sexual abuse perpetrated by men in their respective families. An uncle tried to molest Alice when she was two or three, and her father later made sexual

advances to her. She was abused by a cousin six years older over a period of several years. That abuse included intercourse. Belinda endured abuse by her father that included intercourse. This also lasted several years. Virginia experienced attempts of molestation from two uncles. She also endured years of sexual touches and gestures from her father, she was also beaten by him with a razor strap. According to the empirical literature, all three women experienced the most severe types of child sexual abuse, as defined by invasiveness, frequency, duration, and closeness of the perpetrator (Russell, 1986; Briere & Runtz, 1988). That is, all were abused by men who were part of the immediate family, the abuse lasted several years, occurred frequently, and for Alice and Belinda included intercourse.

The Effects of the Abuse as a Life Course Experience

All three women experienced similar psychological and interpersonal effects from the abuse. They all attributed recurring depression, thoughts of suicide, internalized self-blame, and low self-esteem to the abuse. Each described unhappy marriages in which their husbands had more control, and Virginia and Belinda both experienced sexual problems that they traced to the abuse. The abuse was not a static experience, contained in their childhood or early adult life. Rather, all three women told in their life stories how the abuse intruded throughout their lives, and how they subsequently struggled with the effects of it over the course of their lives.

Alice described the effects of the abuse as a great fear and apprehension that lasted all her life. She also attributed lifelong depression to the abuse, and described it as

a refrain that she repeated again and again throughout her life story. She frequently maintained that she had little control in her marriage and defined her relationships with men in terms of being taken advantage of. She said: "it's it's as far as men are concerned um (5) and my marriages, I don't know, it's um uh I could never see anything very glamorous about a man, and um they only want one thing, they just want to use you." Alice endured the effects of the abuse until late in her life, when she sought help for depression and the grief she felt after her husband's death. Only then did she began to understand the impact of the abuse in her life.

Virginia also attributed life-long depression and low self-esteem to the abuse. The abuse intruded in her marriage, and she described her sexual relationship with her husband as unsatisfactory because his touches reminded her of her father. Virginia said that her husband loved her, but was unable to share things with her. She also described her husband as having greater control than she did, especially in decision making and finances. Virginia was not able to talk about the abuse when she was a child, nor was she able to reach understanding with her husband about how it affected their marriage. Not being heard or understood began in her childhood with the sexual abuse but then became a refrain that Virginia repeated throughout her life story. She is attempting now to find acceptance and respect from her children after her husband's death, and still copes with the effects of the abuse that resurfaces in times of stress.

Belinda also traced depression and low self-esteem to the abuse. Belinda's first husband ridiculed her and taunted her about the abuse by her father. He was not only

cruel, but he was also dishonest and unfaithful, and she retreated from his abusive treatment of her into silence. Belinda said that she never liked sex, she wished that that part of her did not exist. Sex was something to be endured, it was not something that she wanted to enjoy. Later, after she divorced her second husband, she began to question what the abuse meant in her life, and she sought help from a counselor. Belinda used a hypothetical narrative to illustrate problems from the abuse that she still struggles with: internalized self-blame, i.e., feeling that she is untrustworthy. She was in her mid 30's when she first disclosed the abuse to a counselor. While this was the first step in her coping process, she continued to search for resolution, a process that she describes in narratives and explanations as a four year spiritual journey from her late forties to her early fifties.

Both Belinda and Alice said that the Christian training they had as children exacerbated feelings of conflict and guilt they felt about the abuse. On the one hand they knew what was going on in their homes and felt it was wrong, at the same time they could not reconcile that knowledge and their feelings with the concepts of goodness and sin that they encountered in Christian teachings.

Not only did these women trace negative psychological effects and interpersonal problems to the abuse, but Belinda said that she felt that the abuse negatively affected her ability to work. She supported her first husband while he was in college, but quit work when they had children. She did not return to work until her late 40's when she then obtained a nursing degree. She started this career at the same time that she began her

“wandering” days, a time of intense coping with the effects of the abuse. She worked as little as possible during this four year period. She said “I didn’t work you know, I only worked as little as I could, as I had to.” Because she began her career later in life and because she worked infrequently, Belinda has little money now during her retirement. Alice, in contrast, worked all of her life. She was “too busy making a living” throughout her life, and had no time to think about the effects of the abuse such as the depression or low self-esteem. Although she endured those effects until late in life, working hard has benefited her. She now receives a pension of her own, in addition to social security, and lives comfortably. Virginia worked at home while she and her husband raised six children and she receives her late husband’s pensions. While Belinda traces her reduced income to the abuse, Alice and Virginia do not. All three women, however, traced negative psychological effects and interpersonal problems to the abuse. These effects, as well as their efforts to cope with them, continued throughout their lives.

Coping with the Abuse

All three women shared common coping strategies. They initially endured the abuse and did not disclose it to anyone. Although Virginia resisted the advances of her uncles and told her parents when the first uncle tried to molest her, they did not believe her. She endured years of sexual touching by her father. Belinda and Alice endured years of sexual intercourse with their father and uncle, respectively.

Silence then was part of the way that all three women endured the abuse as children. They continued as adults to endure the effects of the abuse in silence and did not

talk about it. Silence was not limited to the abuse nor to their childhood. Without anyone to hear them they did not develop the ability to tell who they were, to express their feelings and thoughts,. The silence then reverberated into their adult lives and led to isolation and loneliness.

All three acquiesced to the abuse that they could not stop. They all repeated this pattern of acquiescence in their marriages. They described their husbands as having more control in their marriages. Alice depicts herself as the provider in her marriage, but she characterizes her husband as having more control. Although she describes the last years of their marriage as unhappy and claimed her husband would have left her had he not needed her, she stayed with him and provided the intensive care that he needed the last four years of his life. Belinda supported her first husband through college. She acquiesced to him despite his cruel treatment of her, and withdrew into silence. Virginia also described her husband as having more control in their marriage. He was the primary provider and decided how they could spend their money. She did not question his control, however, until he died when she realized not only that they were in debt, but that she could not find insurance policies that she needed.

Endurance then was a primary coping strategy for all three women for much of their adult lives. Endurance allowed them to survive the effects of the abuse for years before they sought help. As a long term strategy, endurance was not very effective in managing depression or low self-esteem. All three women experienced recurring depression. Eventually each of them, at different times in their lives, sought help from a

counselor for the effects of the abuse. Alice said that when she “couldn’t grit her teeth hard enough anymore,” she contacted a counselor and told her about the abuse. Alice has continued to see the counselor infrequently for the past ten years for things that just “stack up.” She is doing better now, she claims, than she ever has. Belinda sought help from a psychiatrist for depression after her husband’s suicide. She described learning to talk about the abuse as a process. First she could only sob, then she could talk about it but still sobbed, and finally, with repeated attempts, she could tell what had happened to her. Virginia, with the help of her minister, told her family about the abuse in the childhood. She said that telling her family about her father helped them understand her. For all three women disclosing the abuse then was a first step in breaking the silence and coping with the effects of it.

While Belinda endured the effects of the abuse until middle age, she then spent several years of intensive coping with them. She has taken elaborate steps to overcome the abuse. She has gone to support groups, done affirmations, gone through 12 Step Programs, and worked with individual counselors. For four years in her late 40’s she sought counseling and began an intensive spiritual journey she described as “wandering the waterfront.” She saw a counselor twice a week and learned several techniques for relaxation and meditation. She describes this time as a second childhood, a time of intensive reflection. She learned to experience simple pleasures that enabled her to “become who she was.”

Blame and Accountability

Each of these women displayed in their narratives and explanations a striking lack of blame toward the perpetrators. None of them openly condemned any of the perpetrators, or even used that word to describe the men who abuse them. Not once did one of these women say, “he was just a real -----.” Neither Alice or Virginia criticized in any way their abusers nor did they hold them accountable for the abuse. Alice said that her uncle “*acted* like he was my sweetheart,” (my emphasis). She chose a word that intimated that this was just his pretense and that she knew the difference, i.e., it was something else to her. Virginia showed in her narratives that her father beat her and attempted to molest her, yet she did not name directly what he did. It is not only a question of blame, she did not hold them to be accountable for the abuse. If her father was guilty of abuse, it is by implication, because she did not say clearly that he was physically and sexually abusive. Belinda, more overtly than Alice or Virginia, was able to hold her father accountable for the abuse. She said that the abuse was wrong, i.e., it was “gross,” “awful.”

Belinda talked about the importance of forgiving her parents, particularly her father. This step came slowly, she said, in steps. Forgiveness meant that she was kind to him, but it did not mean that he could be part of her life. She did not allow her father to visit her, nor did she feel compelled to visit him when he was in the hospital in the town where she lived. Forgiveness did not mean either that she could expect kindness from him, it did not change him at all. Forgiveness helped Belinda reclaim her life from the

effects of the abuse. It allowed her some degree of resolution of the abuse and resulted in “peace.”

In contrast, Virginia did not reach resolution with her father. When he came into her house after she was married and threatened her, she broke off relations with him. Virginia expressed sorrow that she could not “make” her parents understand her feelings or respect her. Belinda’s father lives several thousand miles away from her, and it is possible that the physical distance between them helped her set limits on his behavior. Clearly Belinda’s father does not respect her, that is, he did not accept his role in the abuse, nor struggled with the damage he did to his children. As she pointed out, when she asked him not to phone her he ignored her request. However, the distance between them may have made it easier for her to maintain contact with him. At the same time, Belinda was better able to articulate what the abuse meant than Virginia. Belinda wrote to her father and told him that she forgave him for abusing her. Virginia was not able to clearly define her father’s sexual gestures as abuse. Virginia did not forgive her father because forgiveness requires definition, that is, you can not be forgiven someone for something that they have not done. If you don’t assign a transgression, you can not offer forgiveness.

Self blame

At the same time, Belinda and Virginia indicated in their narratives that they did not blame their abusers but instead assumed responsibility for the abuse. Virginia, speaking of the men in her family who molested her, blamed herself for attracting that kind of attention. In the explanations and narratives about her childhood, Virginia

attempted to share responsibility for the conflict with her parents by casting herself as a rebellious teenager. "We just didn't get along, she said." The literature indicates that self-blame is associated with more negative effects of child sexual abuse such as depression and low self-esteem (Wyatt & Newcomb, 1990; Hoagwood, 1990). In Virginia's case, self-blame is related to endurance, particularly silence. It is part of not having a voice, of not declaring how she feels. She judges her parents with the circumstances, the contextual conditions, but is unable to hold them accountable. Instead she assumes responsibility by attracting their attention. Like other survivors of abuse, she blames herself for a childhood that as Janoff-Bulman (1992) says, shatters the basic assumptions about the self and the world.

Self-blame for Belinda is more complicated. Self-blame is not just covertly evident in her narratives. She states it outright, "I thought that it (the abuse) was *all* my fault (my emphasis)." On the one hand, self-blame is part of the guilt she has felt for her husband's suicide, and part of the internalized self-blame that is a consequence of the sexual abuse. At the same time, she claims that blaming herself for the abuse may have "saved" her because by blaming herself she had no excuses for not doing what she wanted to do. Blaming herself, Belinda claims, forced her out of a victim's role. Belinda contrasts herself to her sister, who blamed their father for the effects of the abuse. She quotes her sister to make her point, "if it hadn't been for our Dad I could do this, if it hadn't been for our Dad I could do that." Not only was their father responsible for the abuse, but he was also to blame for the effects of it. Belinda, on the other hand, connects

blame and responsibility. If the abuse was not her fault, her responsibility, then change or growth was not within her grasp. But if she was responsible for the abuse, then she was also her responsible for making choices, for doing for herself what she wanted. Self-blame did not by any means set Belinda free, nor does she indicate in any way that she believes that she caused the abuse, that her father was an innocent man who loved his children in a healthy way. She indicates throughout her life story that the abuse stunted her extensively. Yet holding her father accountable for the abuse has allowed her to forgive him, and taking responsibility for effects of the abuse has allowed her to change and “become herself, ” within the constraints or the terrible costs of the abuse.

Resiliency

Endurance allowed each woman to survive the abuse until she was able to seek help for the effects of it. To characterize their lives only in terms of endurance would be to ignore tremendous accomplishments that they made in spite of the abuse. All three women demonstrate differing degrees of resiliency, a capacity that can develop over time in the context of person-environment interactions (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). Grossman and Moore (1994) have outlined four components of resiliency, the capacity to recover from or transcend the abuse and neglect in their childhood. The first component is the ability to function well in adult life despite a history of horrendous abuse and often enormous psychological pain, both conscious and unconscious. The second component is the capacity to function well in adult life using survival skills developed in childhood. These skills may include a high threshold for pain, or the capacity to work hard and

productively without feeling the need to attend to one's own needs. The third component is the capacity to transform relationships into functional ways of relating. Finally the fourth component is the ability to make terrible childhood experiences into something that has meaning not just for the self, but for others.

All three women exhibit resiliency according to this model. For example, all have functioned well despite what is, particularly in Belinda's case, a history of horrendous abuse. Alice worked many different kinds of jobs, adapting her skills to existing opportunities in order to make a living for herself and her partner or husband. She wanted to pastor churches and struggled to obtain an education in Christian ministry. She then pastored churches for several years. Alice described with pride her accomplishments in caregiving for her husband during his illness. Belinda returned to school in her late 40's and obtained a nursing degree. Although her struggle to cope with the effects of the abuse interfered with her ability to work, she describes several achievements in nursing. She taught nursing classes, something that she loved, and she was assistant director of nursing at one of the agencies where she was employed. Education was important to Belinda too, and she retired early in order to obtain a bachelor's degree in nutrition.

Alice most clearly demonstrates the capacity to work hard and productively without feeling the need to attend to one's own needs. As mentioned previously, she worked hard all of her life, despite difficult and demanding work conditions and the limited opportunities that were available to women of her generation. She described being too busy to cope with the problems that she experienced from the abuse, but when her

husband died she took the time to do something for herself, and sought help in coping with the recurrent depression.

All three women demonstrated an ability to transform the nature of their relationships and relate in a relatively open, trusting, reciprocal manner, particularly with their children. They have been able to love and care for their children in ways that they were not cared for. Alice described her marriage as not particularly happy, but she provided quality care for her husband when he was ill. Belinda has described her relationships with friends and children as trusting and reciprocal. Virginia not only mothered her five children, but she took in a cousin and raised her when the cousin's family fell apart. Although Virginia is currently experiencing difficulty with her children as she builds a new life for herself, she discussed having an open, caring relationship with them in the past. Both Virginia and Belinda spoke of the importance of their relationships with their grandchildren.

These women have demonstrated resiliency in other ways too. Not only have they have tried to make their experience into something of meaning for others but they have struggled to find meaning for themselves. All three volunteered for this study saying that if their stories helped other women in any way, then the discomfort of telling would be worthwhile. These women have found meaning in the ability to care for those around them, despite not receiving that care as children. As mentioned, Alice cared for her husband, and still cares for others in her volunteer work. In learning to treat others with kindness these women have transcended the cruelties done to them.

All three women have developed the ability to care for others, and they have also found time to develop the ability to care for themselves. For Alice this step came late in life. She learned to paint when her husband was ill and she stayed in the house to care for him. She continued to paint after his death, and has had several shows of her paintings. Belinda continues to write, as well as maintain a meditation practice. Virginia has acquired a horse, herds cows, and also does art work. In very different ways then, all three women have developed their own interests and found ways of expressing themselves.

The Telling of the Story

Structural Organization of the Life Story

There are more similarities than differences in the sexual abuse that each woman experienced in her childhood. How each of them coped with the abuse, however, differs considerably, as does how they tell their story. That is, the organizational structure of the life story and the structure of their individual narratives are different because they reflect the different ways that these women have coped with the abuse.

For example, Alice followed a loosely chronological order in telling her life story, and did not orient her story by time, i.e., she seldom referred to either her age or the year of the event. She told her story in four global episodes, organized around general themes: the abuse in her childhood, her early relationships, caregiving for her husband, and her struggles with her health after his death. Alice did not resolve the effects of the abuse, she endured it, and the patterns of silence and acquiescence that began with the abuse continued throughout her adult life until her early 60's. Much of her life story then is

difficult, painful, and lacks resolution. She uses a metaphor of a heavy weight, to describe the burden of depression and repeats this description as a refrain throughout her life story. In Alice's life story endurance implies knowledge or acceptance of something that was intolerable for most of her life. It is a difficult admission, but one that she can make because she chooses to tell her life story in a form that closes off the past from the present. Using the global episodes allows Alice to omit a great deal of painful detail, sparing herself the emotional pain of the time when she did not contend with recurrent depression or the power imbalances in her marriage. She does not have to answer the question, "what did the abuse mean," until the last episode when she began to cope with the problems that she traces to the abuse. The episodic structure allows Alice to tell a tale of endurance because it allows her to both claim her past and to protect herself from the emotional impact of it. The way that she tells her story reflects how she understands the abuse and how she coped with it throughout her life. She can recount her past and claim hope for her future because her present is protected from that past.

Virginia, on the other hand, does not close off her past. On the contrary, after beginning her life story with accounts of the abuse, she told the rest of her life story in a series of temporal shifts, moving back in forth between the past and the present. This way of telling reflects her understanding of her present life because problems from her past are threaded from the past into the present. Virginia had no one to talk to in her childhood, and the lack of understanding and validation carried over from her childhood into her marriage. She also links the abuse in her childhood with sexual problems with her

husband. She is now having difficulty with her children, problems that are exacerbated because she can not tell them who she is and what she needs. She feels now the same isolation that resulted from not speaking and not being heard throughout her life. Virginia is very much in an ongoing process of coping with the effects of the abuse. She is learning to speak up, learning to talk to her children about her feelings and needs. The temporal shifts that form her life story reflect this ongoing coping, a process of understanding how the abuse affected her, resolving her past, and reclaiming her voice.

Finally, Belinda tells her life story as a tale of two lives. Her “first life” spans her childhood and first marriage which were dominated by the sexual abuse from her father and the emotional and verbal abuse by her husband. She lost her childhood, she says, because of the abuse. Her “second life” is literally a story of reclamation, a process of becoming herself that began with a spiritual journey which she characterized as “wandering” days. She is different, she claims, as a result of this journey and her other coping efforts. She illustrates her changes with stories that contrast her behavior with that of her father and first husband: she forgives her father and achieves a kind of peace that her first husband never attained. Thus Belinda, like Alice, splits off a difficult and intolerable past from her present with the organization of her life story, and the way that she coped with the abuse forms and organizes the way that she tells her life story.

Narrative construction

All three women use a variety of narratives as they tell their life stories. Alice and Virginia used stories to describe the specific incident when their father attempted to

molest them. They used habitual narratives to describe abuse that lasted years. Using words like “always,” “as I was growing up, he would,” “always would,” “would touch,” they indicated grammatically the repetitiveness of the events. Belinda and Virginia used hypothetical narratives to contrast what happened with what did not or could have happened.

All three women frequently told stories without resolution. For example, when Belinda described the abuse by her father, (see page) she ended the narrative without resolution or coda. Nothing summed up this story because it did not end, it continued for years. Virginia also told stories and narratives without resolution. When describing the time that her uncle attempted to molest her (page), she ended the narrative with an evaluative clause: her parents did not believe her or do anything about the abuse. In this way, the lack of structural resolution to the narratives represents grammatically abuse that was not resolved, abuse that continued without parental intervention.

Not only do these three women organize their life stories very differently, but they construct their narratives differently as well. The differences in the narrative structures reflect the different ways that they coped with the abuse. For example, silence is part of the way that Alice endured the abuse in childhood and the consequences of it as an adult. She uses chronicles, a form of discourse that does not contain evaluation, to keep hidden her feelings about parts of her life that are a potential source of discomfort.

Alice also tells her narratives with few evaluative clauses, and instead uses extended orientations to create contextual conditions and pictures that illustrate her point.

She seldom says directly how she felt or what she thought. For example, in the first narrative that she told about the abuse (page), she implied but did not state the power differential between her and the uncle who abused her. He was the teacher, she the student. She continues throughout her life story to make her points subtly, through detail provided in the orientation clauses. In the story she told about her husband's character (page), she drew a picture of him as a womanizer, a man with loose morals. She did not label him, but rather drew a picture of him with persuasive detail and left me to draw my conclusions. The way that Alice constructs her narratives reflects the way that she has coped with the abuse. It is a form of acquiescence, a way of claiming that she had no control, these were the conditions, she had no choice, what else could she do but acquiesce.

Virginia resisted the abuse by her uncles and told her parents about the first incident. They did not believe her or validate her resistance. All through the narratives of her childhood, she too used contextual detail to persuade the listener to her point, but she seldom tells how she feels or what she thought. Although she depicts the sexual and physical abuse that she endured as a child, she does not criticize or judge her parents. For example, when she described the way that her father disciplined her in the habitual narrative (page 115), she did not say directly with evaluative clauses that this was physical abuse. Instead she provided that information subtly, through orientation clauses. She, like Alice, casts the causal conditions in her life as contextual conditions. She constructed a picture of being "spanked" with a razor strap "numerous times" until she

“could hardly walk.” Thus, she left the judgment to the audience, to determine whether this was appropriate discipline or abuse.

Virginia says that throughout her childhood there was no one to talk to, no one whom she trusted who could “hear” her. She repeats the theme of not being heard from her childhood in her marriage. Although she tried to talk to her husband and let him know how abuse by her father affected their sexual relationship, he did not listen to her. She was unable to “get him to understand.” Without this validation Virginia lost her voice, and is silent in her narratives about how she feels and what she thinks. Since her early 40’s she has made attempts to speak, first telling the minister about her childhood, and then her family. More recently she has sought help from a counselor for problems with her children and is learning to talk to them, to tell them how she feels and what she needs. Virginia is in the process of regaining her voice and her efforts are shown by the more frequent use of evaluation in the narratives of her present life and marriage. Thus the ways that Virginia is coping with the effects of the abuse and neglect in her childhood are part of how she tells her story and are represented by the gradual infusion of her voice into the narratives that she constructs to tell her life story.

Belinda’s narratives of the childhood abuse are riddled with hesitations, faltering and broken thoughts, all of which represent her struggle to tell what is still impossible to tell, nearly 60 years later. The abuse destroyed her childhood and left a devastating legacy, including sexual problems, low self-esteem, and lost opportunities. Her first marriage repeated these abusive conditions. Her husband was cruel to her, ridiculed her,

taunted her about the abuse in her childhood, and was unfaithful. Her narratives of this marriage are fragmented as she embeds them with other stories or contextual detail in order to “show” her innocence in her husband’s suicide. This fractured structure and loss of cohesiveness reflect her understanding of this husband’s death, and her fluctuation between feeling guilty for his death and knowing that she is innocent.

By the end of her “first life,” Belinda had lost her voice and could not talk. In her “second life” she regained her voice a process that began with talking about the abuse. She learned not only to talk about the abuse, but she now says how she feels, what she thinks. Thus her narratives include many evaluative clauses that tell how she felt, what she thought. The abuse by her father was “gross, just awful.” “I don’t know why he treated me so terribly,” she said of her husband. Belinda has spent years coping with the effects of the abuse and her “second life” is literally told as a tale of her coping efforts. Those efforts are reflected in the narratives by the strength of her voice. She makes the claim that she “came to who she was” as a result of her spiritual journey. She proves this claim by the use of her voice in her narratives to declare who she is and what she believes.

Alice was in her early 60’s while Virginia and Belinda were in their 40’s when each sought help for the effects of the abuse. Alice endured the effects the longest, until she could not “grit her teeth” anymore. She has gained some understanding of what the abuse means in this last episode of her life. As she tells her story she closes off her past from the question “what did the abuse mean,” but answers that question now because she

can claim that the abuse is resolved and that she is now “happy.” Virginia was in her early 40’s when she contacted the minister after the confrontation with her father. After telling her family about the abuse, she did not seek further help. She has not found resolution, but has begun to cope with the effects of the abuse again after her husband’s death. Her story reflects her current coping efforts as the past infuses her present. Belinda also sought help for the abuse when she was in early 40’s, but she continued throughout the next decade of her life to find resolution. Her efforts are clearly illustrated in the strength of her voice as she tells her life story. She lays her past to rest by splitting it off from the present and claims a new life and a new self. She proves her claim with the strength of her voice and with her efforts to demonstrate how different she is from her father and her first husband.

In summary, three older women, ages 57, 67, and 75, described pervasive childhood sexual abuse and negative effects from it, including depression, low self-esteem, and lost opportunities, that has lasted throughout their lives. Coping with the abuse has been a lifelong endeavor and each woman revealed her sense of understanding of the abuse through the way that she told her life story. Thus narrative analysis of these life stories reveals not only the impact of the abuse throughout their lives, but facilitates an understanding of what it meant to them and how they have coped with it.

In the next two chapters I will examine across cases the abuse, its impact, and how other women coped with it. A cross cases examination develops broader categories than can be found by examining an individual life. Those categories, however, can not be

applied to any individual woman. No one person experienced all of the effects attributed to the abuse or used all of the methods of coping. Thus this triptych of stories has provided a glimpse of how the abuse has played out over the course of three specific lives.

Chapter 7
The Abuse and the Consequences:
Child Sexual Abuse Across the Life Course

Introduction

When recruiting women for this study, child sexual abuse was defined as “being touched as a child in a way that made you feel uncomfortable.” The definition included specific acts of attempted intercourse, oral sex, sodomy, genital touching, sexual kissing, pornographic picture taking, sexual exhibitionism, or forced or coerced sexual behavior imposed on a child (under age 18).

Women described different kinds of behaviors as abuse, and they used a variety of ways to talk about it that reflect their understanding of the event in their lives. As I attempt to describe across cases both the abuse and women’s views of the effects of it in their lives, I have included the narratives and explanations that express their individual understanding now as they recount their past. I will begin with their definitions of sexual abuse and the causal conditions that either enabled or facilitated it. I will then describe the effects that women traced to the abuse. Finally, I will describe the intervening conditions: factors that either exacerbated or mitigated the abuse or the effects of it.

The Abuse

Behaviors that women described as sexual abuse generally fell within the initial definition proposed in the study, although some women included sexual comments as well as sexual contact in their definitions. With two exceptions, all of the women in the study described incest, i.e., abuse perpetrated by relatives. This included brothers, uncles, great uncles, cousins, grandfathers, and fathers. One woman was abused by a non-relative

as well as by her uncle. One of the women abused only by non-relatives was raped at the age of 14 by two older family friends. The other was touched vaginally by her girlfriend's father when she was 8 or 9.

Verbal Comments

Some women described as sexual abuse comments that drew attention to their sexuality, i.e., comments about their breasts, buttocks, particularly during puberty. Lydia described her cousin's remarks: "Well old Joe would be right in there, saying 'oh look at you' you know, and it was horrible, he was horrible, and I couldn't stand it." Belinda said that her father described sexual acts and used sexually graphic language while he abused her. Because these women related their accounts as habitual narratives, as established, repetitive experiences of their lives, these comments were abusive. For example, Susanna used this habitual narrative to describe her father's verbal abuse:

1	23	OR	I mean it's just like what he was in
2	24	CA	you know I mean he would <i>talk</i> , talk about my, you
	24		know,
3	24	CA	I mean he was just always jokes
4	25	EV	and the things he said were just awful.
	25		[About you]
5	264	EV	about <i>me</i> . Yeah. Yeah.
6	26		[Susanna, you went like this, (I put my hands across my
	27		breasts), does that mean he talked about your body]
7	27	EV	oh yess, yes, yes. Absolutely. You know.

With the words, "he would talk talk," "he always," Susanna emphasizes the repetitiveness of the abuse. She implies that his comments were sexual in nature, and indicates with her gesture that his comments were about her breasts. She emphasizes my recognition of her gesture with repetition and intonation, "oh yess, yes, yes." Her

hesitations and broken sentences indicate the difficulty of describing the comments. They were “awful” then and they are still painful now.

Sexual Contact

Sexual contact included a range of sexual behaviors from exposure to intercourse. Cathy described a sexual gesture by her father as “psychological incest.” He exposed himself to her in the interest of her education, to “show her what an erect penis looked like.” Louise, Zella, and Susanna were forced to touch or masturbate the abuser or he masturbated against them. Jean and Irene described vaginal fondling. Virginia said that her father touched her sexually as she was growing up, i.e., over a number of years. Lydia, now 58, described persistent sexual touches by her older cousin that began when she was 10 or 11. “He just couldn’t keep his hands off any of us, and with the whole family there he was smooching everybody. He was right underneath everybody’s breasts, he was grabbing our behinds, he was French kissing.” Anne told a story of a brutal sexual assault by her father when she was 13. Angela was raped by her grandfather when she was 11. Belinda and Alice described intercourse with their father or uncle.

Causal Conditions

Women described causal conditions, i.e., historical factors or cultural norms that either enabled or facilitated the abuse. These conditions included family characteristics or norms such as silence, the differences in power between children and adults, paternal absence, and lack of maternal affirmation. Gender roles also acted as a causal condition in facilitating the abuse.

Silence

Four of the twelve women told their parents about the abuse. Lydia told her mother about her cousin who constantly touched her sexually. Irene told her grandparents that her girlfriend's father molested her. Virginia told her parents when she was 7 that her 16 year old uncle tried to molest her. Finally, Jean told her mother that her great uncle had molested her.

The rest of the women did not tell anyone about the abuse, and this silence allowed it to continue. Silence was a consequence of family norms about talking, the lack of a trusted adult, and the child's fear of negative consequences. Silence as a family rule prevented some children from telling anyone outside the family what happened within it. Alice said she did not talk about the abuse because "We were told *what goes on in this house stays in this house.*" Silence in the family also prevented children from telling their parents or guardians what was happening to them. For example, Angela was raped by her grandfather when she was 11. She did not tell any one what happened because silence was the norm in her family. She said "I was mute, I didn't say a word."

This is Angela's story about the sexual attack by her grandfather:

1	120	OR	my grandfather paid for a little summer cottage
2	122	OR	and um he my grandfather would come out weekends
3	123	OR	and again you know uh if he got me in a corner and stuff,
4	123	OR	and I remember when I was 11 years old
5	124	OR	and the cottage next to us was an Italian family, blond
	124		Italians
6	125	OR	and I think there was a 19 year old boy there, beautiful
	125		blond,
7	125	OR	I was boy crazy,
8	125	OR	I matured really fast, um
9	126	OR	but what I <i>wanted</i> was,

10 126 OR I heard them laughing while they ate,
 11 126 OR I heard conversations
 12 126 OR I heard,
 13 127 OR I was in love with his *mother*, you know
 14 127 OR and I would be over there all the time
 15 127 OR just that warmth was something that wasn't around
 16 128 AB and I got punished,
 17 128 CA my Dad came out one weekend
 18 128 CA and found me over there
 19 129 CA and thought I was doing something with the boy I guess
 20 129 CA and I was forced to stay the last three weeks of our
 130 vacation
 21 130 CA I had to stay in the cottage,
 130 OR I I wasn't allowed out on the lake, I wasn't, and and
 22 131 CA my grandfather came out
 22 131 OR and my brother and my mother and my father went to one
 23 132 of these outdoor movies [um hmm]
 132 CA and they left me alone with my grandfather
 24 132 CA and that's when he came naked into my bed
 25 133 EV and uh of course I was being punished
 26 133 EV and in my mind this sexual, whatever he was doing um
 28 134 CA and I was mute, I didn't say a word, um (4)
 29 134 EV in my mind it was all part of "you're a bad girl, you di"
 you know
 30 135 OR and of course there wasn't anybody to tell [um hmm]
 31 135 EV I mean he didn't say "don't tell,"
 32 136 EV I mean nothing,
 33 136 EV I I mean who who could I talk,
 34 136 OR I never talked to anybody,
 35 137 OR nobody talked to me,
 36 140 EV but uh I'll never forget that in my mind um the sexual
 140 thing
 37 141 EV as always "you're a bad girl" you know [um hmm]
 38 142 OR and um I remember that part um (5)
 39 142 OR this is all uh the the way I was raised
 40 142 CO you said life story,
 41 143 CO I'm trying to remember the highlights of the sexual what
 42 143 CO they call sexual abuse now,
 43 143 R but it's all mixed up with the silence

Angela casts the sexual abuse by her grandfather in story form, a genre of narrative that depicts a specific event. At the same time she describes, through contextual detail, pervasive family silence that facilitated the abuse. She suggests that her grandfather still touched her sexually when he could, something that she previously disclosed. She describes the neighboring family in three lines (10-12) that begin with “I heard,” a phrase that contrasts sharply with the silence of her own family. Angela emphasizes her father’s needless suspicion and subtly proclaims her innocence because she was attracted to the mother, not the boy. With words like “forced, had to stay, wasn’t allowed, left me alone” she underscores her lack of control. She claims in the abstract (line 16) that her story is about her punishment, and she repeats with parental voice the words “you’re a bad girl”. Her experience in the family was wordless, without words she had no voice to describe the abuse. She emphasizes her isolation by reiterating that there was no one for her to tell (lines 33, 34, 35). She remembers the abuse vividly, and it is compounded by the silence of her childhood.

Angela uses this story to illustrate the family atmosphere and conditions that enabled the abuse. Her grandfather’s assault was not just an isolated incident, she claims, but rather fit into the backdrop of the silence and alienation that was her family life. Her depiction of the neighbors’ warmth and openness highlights the silence and suspicion in her own family. She describes the abuse tersely, with one line (24), but mentions the silence repeatedly (lines 28, 30, 33, 34, 35, 43), emphasizing the importance of the silence in the meaning of the abuse. She leaves the story and returns to the present in the

coda (lines 40-43). I have asked her to tell her life story and she is trying to remember the abuse. Then she returns to sum up the story explicitly, silence and the abuse are “all mixed up.”

Anne, a 59 year old woman, was sexual assaulted by her father when she was 14. That assault was met with silence that became more painful than the assault. She told this story about the assault and what it meant to her:

1	94	OR	So anyway I was sent to his place to stay for the summer.
2	95	OR	The summer I was thirteen
3	95	OR	while my mother went off and did her divorce and trip
	96		and so on and um (3)
4	96	OR	uh he was married again
5	96	OR	and they had a little baby named Warren and uh (8) uh (p)
6	97	OR	my father was always a very heavy drinker
7	97	CA	and he went out and um got drunk one night
8	98	OR	and he was also very abusive person, violent
9	98	CA	and he came home drunk this one night
10	98	CA	and his wife,
11	99	OR	I guess having learned through experience what to expect
	99		from him,
12	99	CA	had locked their bedroom door
13	100	CA	and he tried to break it down but he couldn't
14	100	OR	and my bedroom was right across the hall
15	101	CA	and he came in my room
16	101	CA	and threw himself on top of me
17	101	EV	and again I didn't really understand the intent of his
	102		attack,
18	102	EV	I didn't really know about sex,
19	102	CA	but the first thing I knew he was all over me with his
	103		mouth,
20	103	CA	um bit my, I um little tiny breasts at that age, scratches,
21	103	CA	he put his fingers in my vagina
22	104	CA	and um had his clothes mostly off um
23	104	CA	he grabbed my hand and made me touch his erect penis
24	105	CA	and I was struggling and crying and screaming (7)
25	105	OR	but his wife um had called the police
26	106	CA	and the police came into the room into the house
27	106	CA	and into the room and took him away.

28 107 R So he never succeeded in actually raping me (6)
 29 107 OR um after his. um after he was taken away
 30 108 CA my stepmother went back in her bedroom
 31 108 CA and locked the door and cried all night
 32 108 EV I don't remember crying
 33 109 EV I was I was um frightened and just deeply confused and
 109 baffled
 34 110 EV because I didn't *understand* about uh *rape*. Uh
 35 110 EV I didn't know what that *was* or anything.
 36 110 R So it was like my first knowledge of *sex* and men and
 111 sexual relations
 37 111 EV and I was just baffled and *frightened*
 38 112 EV and I didn't want to grow up
 39 112 EV and I had never I had always *hated* being a girl
 40 112 EV and now I *really* hated being a girl
 41 113 CA and anyway I remember tossing and turning and thinking
 113 about that all night.
 42 113 CA I woke up the next morning,
 43 114 CA and I didn't wake up I got up
 44 114 OR and my stepmother was downstairs bustling around with
 115 orange juice
 45 115 CA and I know my face was bruised and my lip was *cut*
 46 115 CA and I had bruises and scratches everywhere
 47 116 CA and the only thing she said to me was "good morning"
 116 (She cries) (5)
 48 117 CA and I just said "good morning"
 49 117 CA and I never said anything. (6)

Anne tells a highly coherent story of the assault by her father. She constructs her memory in story form, recreating with graphic details the brutality of the assault by her father. She resolves the story twice. First she indicates that although her father attempted to rape her, he did not succeed. Then she sums up the story and tells the meaning of the assault, this was her first knowledge of sexual relations. Anne indicates with the evaluative clauses that she felt confused and frightened. Before the attack she had conflicting feelings about being a girl, after the attack, she says, she hated it. There is no

final resolution to Anne's story, however. She can recount the assault, but she indicates 45 years later with tears and a pause that the silence of her stepmother is now more painful than the assault. She ends her story with an echo of her stepmother's silence and her own response she said nothing either, her stepmother's silence became hers.

Angela says that she was silent about the abuse because she had no voice, and because she had no one to tell. Other women also said they had no one in their family that they could tell. Virginia's parents discounted her reports of abuse and she did not tell them when she was abused again. Confiding sexual abuse requires trust. Women whose fathers made sexual advances to them destroyed the trust that they needed to confide other instances of abuse. As Alice said "from that time on I was afraid of *him*."

Fear of negative consequences also prevented women from telling about the abuse. Some women did not tell their parents because they feared their mother might be either angry or upset. Others said they feared their parents would divorce or they feared they would be blamed for the abuse. Several women encountered physical abuse during their childhood that engendered fear that made it more difficult to report the abuse. For example, Virginia, Alice, and Angela, were all afraid of being beaten with a razor strap. Louise said that her father beat her and her sisters on the legs with a rubber hose. They "both remember our legs just being welts." She continued with this explanation of why she could not tell about the abuse by an uncle:

1	383	um he would always do it when no one else was home,
2	384	he had a little room up in the attic
3	384	and you went up and you got to
4	384	he would there would I don't know
5	385	I mean stuff, I remember one of these stereoptic viewers

6	385		and they had stuff up there that you got to see when you
	386		went up there [um hmm]
7	386		um plus I was just afraid of him
8	387	proposition	because as I said he would threaten and um (p)
9	387		yet and I look back and I think “why did I <i>take</i> that”
10	388		and yet I don’t I I couldn’t figure out what else I could
	388		have done
11	388		because I I was young
12	388		and I had I don’t know if my if
13	389	proposition	I couldn’t go to my father because he’d been doing the
	389		same thing
14	392	proposition	and as I said because we had been hit
15	393		and we were so afraid of my father [um hmm]
16	393		um I I didn’t know <i>what</i> to do about it

Louise hesitates and falters as she tries to explain why she did not tell her father about the abuse. Her explanation is posed as a question that is still unanswered. She implies his greater power and control in the first line, her uncle always abused her when no one else was home. He used both bribery and threats to ensure her compliance and she did not know what to do. She asks herself now, why did she take that, and answers with a refrain that she repeats throughout the explanation (lines 4, 10, 12, 16), she did not know what to do. She changes verb tense three times indicating that she still does not know. What could she do, she asks. She proposes three reasons that she could not resist or tell anyone. First, as a child she was powerless and isolated. Second, she was afraid of her father because he physically abused her. Finally, what would her father say about her uncle when he “was doing the same thing.” Louise’s explanation illustrates several reasons that children were silent about the abuse, and introduces a reason why many women complied with the abuse: the power differential between children and adults.

Power Differential Between Children and Adults

Several women said that they were helpless to resist the abuse because they were weaker, had less control and power than the adults who abused them. Louise pointed out that the power difference between children and adults was even greater when she was growing up in the '30's than it is today. Jean told this story to explain why she did not resist the advances of her great uncle:

1	39	AB	the other uh occasion was with one of my grandfather's
	39		brothers
2	39	OR	and he he came from LA
3	40	OR	and he had a very fat wife aunt Maybelle
4	40	OR	and we were all sitting in the living room talking
5	41	OR	and I sat on his lap
6	41	CA	and he was putting his hands inside my pants
7	41	CA	and feeling of me
8	42	EV	and I'd never had anything like this happen in my life you
	42		know
9	42	EV	and I kind of you know
10	42	EV	I didn't like
11	43	OR	but you're not rude to adults you know
12	43	CA	and so I just got away as soon as I could you know
13	44	OR	I think this happened twice I'm not positive
14	44	OR	I was about 7 then
15	44	CA	and I told my mother
16	45	R	and that was the last time I ever saw Uncle Larry (laughs)
17	45	EV	but it was a yucky squeamy feeling I ne you know
18	45	EV	I hated it and (p)
19	46	EV	and I don't know I just
20	46	CO	it's difficult to believe you just sit there
21	46	CO	and you don't say don't do that you know
22	47	CO	but you're a child and you know

Jean says in the abstract that this story is about the second incident of sexual abuse in her childhood. The action of the narrative is told in four clauses, her great uncle molested her, she got away when she could, she told her mother, and her mother put a stop to great uncle Larry's visits. What Jean remembers is how much she hated his

touches. She tells her story with composure, but asks seven times (“you know”) for understanding. She changes to the present tense to ask why did she not resist, why did she “just” sit there (lines 20-21). She returns to her story and repeats that she was a child. By implication children do not have the same power that adults have.

Paternal Abuse or Absence

Half of the women in the study were abused by their fathers. In instances where the father was not abusive, he was not involved as a caretaker. For example, Jean told her mother about the abuse by her great uncle. If her father knew about it, she said, he never said anything to her. Angela’s father was a car salesman who worked nights. All he wanted of her mother, she said, “was to have dinner ready at six, no talking at the table and he was gone.”

Lydia, who said that she felt no affirmation from her mother, explained that although she loved her father, he was emotionally absent from her life.

1	42	proposition	my father was very uninvolved with us kids
2	43		except when we were performing (laughs)
3	43		so he could take pictures uh
4	44		he was gone all week um for most of my childhood um
5	44		was on the road, he was a salesman
6	44		and then when he was home
7	45		he wasn’t very good at relating and um
8	45		he spent most of his time watching sports on television
	46		eating stinky cheese (we laugh)
9	46		but I <i>really loved</i> him
10	46		I really thought he was great

Lydia’s father was the financial provider, and worked away from home all week.

He was absent in a dual sense: not only was he away from home much of the time, but

when he was home he was emotionally absent. He “watched” her through the eye of a camera, but he did not relate to her. Although he was “uninvolved,” she emphasizes how much she loved him.

When Lydia complained about her cousin’s sexual touches, she told her mother, not father. She said “I just wouldn’t go to him for help with something if I needed it, because he, it’s like that wasn’t his role you know.” She explained:

1	276		the men didn’t take over and say “cut it out Joe”
2	276		[um hmm] you know they didn’t
	276		they saw it
	277		[and they ignored it]
3	277		and ignored it
4	277	proposition	but uh my expectations were so heavily weighted towards
5	278		the women doing something about it, the Moms
6	278		that it never occurred to me
7	278		that a Dad could do anything about it

The men in her extended family ignored the abuse, Lydia claims, although they saw it and were aware of it. She does not hold them accountable because they were physically and/or emotionally absent, and because she had no expectations of them. Women, mothers, grandmothers and aunts, were expected to protect her. It did not occur to Lydia that fathers could do that because they simply were not in the picture. Thus paternal absence facilitated the abuse in two ways. It left children without protection and made it difficult for them to confide the abuse.

Lack of Maternal Affirmation

Many women described a lack of maternal affirmation or acceptance that helped facilitate the abuse. This lack of affirmation took two forms. In some instances mother’s

discounted their daughters confessions of the abuse, in other instances mothers did not affirm the child's sense of who she was.

Virginia tried to tell her parents when her uncle attempted to molest, but both her mother and father discounted her. Her mother repeatedly refused to respect Virginia's need for confidence and told other people things that Virginia asked her not to tell. Virginia then did not tell her when another uncle tried to molest her. Susanna also tried to tell her mother about the abuse by her father, but her mother would not listen to her. She said, "I tried to talk to my Mom about my Dad. Maaaaan she just lit right in me she didn't want to hear one negative thing."

In telling their life stories women brought up example after example of criticism they received from their mother, as if that is the only thing they could remember. Alice said that her mother did not trust her. Even as an adult she would watch Alice and tell her what to do. Alice said, "she caused me as much grief as the men." The lack of maternal support created low self-esteem or internalized self-blame that facilitated the abuse. In some instances these factors prevented the child from telling about the abuse. Zella said of her grandmother, "I always wanted to be good, although I just wasn't, not according to her standards anyway." When she was abused by a friend of her uncle and by another uncle, Zella assumed that the abuse was confirmation of the fact that she was bad, something that her grandmother had already emphasized to her. She did not tell her grandmother about the abuse then because she was afraid her grandmother would blame her for the abuse.

Susanna told a habitual narrative that illustrates lack of maternal support:

1	28	OR	my mother I mean she just thinks my sister Caroline's is
	28		absolutely beautiful, just beautiful.
2	29	EV	I'm her kind of ugly duckling. you know,
3	29	EV	she never really, she couldn't. she would
4	30	OR	So here I am developing,
5	30	OR	but how she would,
6	30	CA	she would have to get like taffeta and line it with,
7	31	EV	I mean her she was resourceful,
8	31	EV	a wonderful seamstress. And that.
9	32	CA	And um but she would have to line it with um cotton
			fuzzy cotton
10	32	R	so that I looked like I was bigger than I was (laughs
			softly).
11	33	OR	That's how she dressed
12	33	EV	which was very creative on her behalf. [Um hmm]
13	33	EV	And I give her credit for that.
14	34	EV	I just was caught up in embarrassment for myself,
15	34	EV	but I still wasn't perfect.

Susanna begins her narrative with a contrast that implies her mother's criticism.

She hesitates, indicating the difficulty of describing her mother's treatment. She was just a girl, but her mother believed that it was important to enhance her sexuality. Susanna credits her mother as competent and skilled, but also says that her mother "*would have*" (my emphasis) to do this because appearances were important to her, even if they were false. The deception was necessary to her mother because Susanna did not meet her standards for appearances. The deception embarrassed Susanna and undermined her confidence, leaving her vulnerable to her brother and father who abused her but gave her more positive attention.

Lydia describes lack of maternal support as denial and negation:

1	47		my mother my mother was always a burden to me
	47		I didn't like her

2 47 she never um she was always nice to *everybody*
 3 48 except I couldn't figure out why I didn't like her
 4 48 I just couldn't figure that out
 5 48 I mean I was probably in my 30's when I finally figured
 49 out why it was that uh I didn't like her
 6 50 because everybody said oh she was so nice and she was
 50 OK um
 7 50 I didn't like her because every time I talked about how I
 51 felt about something or what I thought about something
 8 52 her line was "give the other person the benefit of the
 52 doubt"
 9 52 which translates to your feelings and thoughts didn't
 53 matter
 10 53 and I mean it was a steady diet of this
 11 53 so that's why I didn't like her you know
 12 54 proposition I had no affirmation from her

Lydia declares over and over (lines 1, 3, 5, 5, 13) that she did not like her mother because she invalidated Lydia's feelings and thoughts. Lydia claims that this negation exacerbated the effects of the sexual abuse by her cousin. She traced years of unwanted sex to the sexual abuse, and said "that [abuse] *coupled* with my mother's constant um denial and negation of my feelings and my thoughts have been a lifetime problem."

Anne, Lydia, and Susanna all contrasted lack of maternal support with validation that they received from others. Lydia said that her aunt Rose "would *always listen* and she wouldn't tell you how to feel and she wouldn't tell you what to think and she was *there* you know, and I mean she was so dear." Susanna too described validation from an aunt, "I just always wanted to have my aunt as my mother. My aunt laughed, could tease with me and told me how wonderful I was. She loved me. I think my mother had strings attached to her love." Anne explained her perception of the difference in the ways that her mother and grandmother treated her.

1 142 my grandmother somehow knew to remind me that I was
 143 proposition uh a thinking independent person,
 2 143 it wasn't about goodness,
 3 143 it was just about being a person,
 4 144 I mean it wasn't that she told me that I was a good girl
 5 144 and my mother told me I was a bad girl,
 6 145 it's- my grandmother treated me as though I was a
 145 person,
 7 145 my mother treated me as though I was object in which she
 145 was disappointed
 8 146 but my grandmother treated me as though I were a person
 9 147 that had talents and rights and abilities and uh character
 147 traits
 10 147 and I don't remember my grandmother ever commenting
 148 on whether my *hair* was becoming
 11 148 or I wore the right thing
 12 149 my grandmother just seemed proud of me for being
 149 myself
 13 149 apart from being socially acceptable

Anne described this grandmother as one of the most important persons in her life, because of the love and validation that she felt from her. Anne felt that she disappointed her mother, but her grandmother in contrast cared for her and validated her feelings and thoughts. Her grandmother did not comment on her appearance, and treated not as an object, but as a "person."

Gender Roles

Gender roles, that is, the differential privileges between male and female children and societal and/or family expectations for girls enabled the abuse in two ways. In some cases, gender differences that privileged boys in the family facilitated the abuse. Susanna, who was sexually abused by her brother, mentioned differential parental expectations for her brother. He was sent to a private school, while she attended a public one. He was fed

steak while the rest of the family went without meat. Susanna said, “ So when my brother came along he was the shining star, he was the *male*. You’ve got to remember these were all Irish people and a woman’s status was very *low*. *He was my idol*, he would protect me, because see as long as I was in good with him I could get in good with my granddad and my uncle and my Dad.” Thus the differential family privilege increased his power over her, and facilitated his ability to sexually abuse her.

Angela also said that her parents had different expectations for her and for her brother. Her parents expected her brother to go to college while they expected Angela to get married. Her mother encouraged Angela’s brother to study, but she expected Angela to help with housework. Angela said “I remember my brother studying and studying or reading. He could have been reading anything for all I know, but my mother always said ‘leave him alone he’s reading, you come down here and help me wash this floor, you help me iron.’” Angela described her brother as “adored, he was a male child.” She, on the other hand, remembers herself as being bad. She said “I kept getting in trouble. I *remember the punishments* because I have this- in those days it was bad girl, bad girl.” This differential treatment, she said, created an overall sense of inadequacy and blame that facilitated the abuse by her grandfather.

Effects of the Abuse

Women described how the abuse affected them throughout their lives. They connected a variety of consequences to the abuse, from poor self esteem, to sexual identity, to damaged marriages. Most of the effects clustered into these general

categories: struggles with responsibility, negative feelings about the self, impaired sexual responses, lost opportunities, and increased knowledge.

Struggles with Responsibility

Women expressed feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame that they attributed to the abuse. At the core of these feelings is the question of responsibility for the abuse. Angela recalled the shame she felt from her grandfather's attack. She said "in reviewing my life I see (4) I see the shame that came from my— it was my paternal grandfather" (who raped her). She described in the story of being raped by her grandfather that the abuse was part of being "a bad girl." Susanna also described "enormous guilt and shame" over the abuse by her brother. It was "absolutely horrifying."

Women repeatedly assumed that the abuse was their fault. When Virginia asked herself, in Chapter 3, why she attracted men *that* way, she implied responsibility for the abuse. She expresses the suspicion that she was complicit or colluded in the acts in ways she did not know how to control. Self-blame did not end in childhood. Virginia said she still asks herself, "why did it happen to you and what did you do to make it happen?" Angela described self-blame as a theme that began with the abuse by her grandfather, but extended through her adult life. She said the "whole leitmotif is not only— um everything is my fault that goes wrong." Belinda said that until she was in her late 40's she thought that the abuse was her fault. She described feelings of internalized self-blame. That is, she now feels untrustworthy, as if people could see that she has been abused and think less of

her, as if they too blame her for the abuse. Susanna blamed herself for experiencing an orgasm when her father abused her:

1	61	OR	And I think when I shared with you
2	61	OR	about being almost 2 years sober,
3	62	CA	and I saw that movie,
4	62	EV	that seemed to bring back a lot of triggers of this incident with my Dad
5	63	EV	or it brought back <i>feelings</i> with it
6	63	EV	that I'd never felt before
7	64	CA	because I remembered that I was stimulated.
8	64	CA	Think I had an orgasm
9	64	EV	and I hated it.
10	64	EV	the thought that I had that.
11	64	CA	So I denied it
12	65	R	and I swore, honest to God, I swore I would never like sex.

This story begins with the time of the interview, when she recounts the story to me. It also includes the time of the abuse, and a later time in her life, when she sees a movie about child sexual abuse and remembers her own experience as an adolescent. Susanna remembers having been aroused by her father and having an orgasm. She remembers feeling guilty for experiencing pleasure. At the time of the abuse she swore never to like sex. Though she may not have been able to stop her father's abuse, and her physical response, she assumes responsibility for the abuse and measures out her own punishment. Susanna not only blamed herself for the abuse by her father, she also blamed herself later for unwanted sex. She said "and I think the thing that that I'm bothered by it all is that is that I I feel like I let it happen, like I have no *will*, or I have no *boundaries*. (p)You know. I mean I drank over that, thinking that it was really, I just didn't know how to deal with that."

Two women claimed that they did not feel responsible for the abuse, not only now, but even when they were children. For example, although Louise described feelings of shame for abuse perpetrated by her father and uncle, she said that she felt powerless to stop it. Because she was powerless she did not feel that she was to blame. Anne also claims that she did not blame herself for the assault by her father. She explained:

1	452	I think that the assault by my father just (4)
2	452	of course it hurt,
3	452	it hurt <i>desperately</i> that no one cared,
4	453	no one cared,
5	453	absolutely no one cared
6	453	proposition and all I could see was weak people who couldn't care
	454	about a child
7	454	and um I guess it just strengthened my resolve to make
	454	my own life in the world,
8	455	the way I want the way I wanted it to be

Anne stresses the word “desperately,” and links the painfulness of the assault with the painfulness of being neglected. She repeats the words “no one cared” emphasizing the completeness of the neglect she experienced as a child. Rather than blaming herself, however, she blamed them for their inability to care for her. Anne uses past and present tense of the verb “want” as she connects the resolve to make her own way which she felt as an adult to how she felt as a child.

Negative Feelings About the Self

Many women attributed to the abuse a lifelong experience of low self-esteem expressed as intellectual inferiority, being unsure of themselves, not liking themselves, or thinking others were better than they were. Susanna said “I didn’t measure up. I never measured up.” Without the abuse she said “well I think um I think I would have been

secure in my own self.” Without the abuse she said she would have had the confidence to say no in unwanted sexual encounters. Virginia also said that without the abuse, “my life would have been different I might have liked myself better.” Alice and Louise described feeling that they thought others were better or smarter than they were. Louise said, “I’ve had very low self-esteem, I’m very unsure of myself.” Belinda said, “I always think that people will think the worst of me, I never have thought they would think the best of me.” Her life too without the abuse would have been better, and self-esteem is part of that improvement. She said “my life would have been different, I would have gone to school earlier, [um hmm] I think it took me a long time to fi I even had a brain, really I felt dumb most of my life.”

Anne said that she felt suicidal throughout her childhood and early adulthood. Virginia mentioned suicide attempts, the most recently last spring. Zella described depression and suicidal thoughts in this way, “I don’t know that I was depressed uh I it goes further than that, it’s frantic, and I followed a gasoline tanker up the highway, and crossing the bridge over the river I forget where, I was a little voice said in my head ‘I wish I had the guts to do it, I would go underneath this sucker.’”

Belinda, Virginia, Zella, and Louise traced lifelong depression to the abuse. Alice, in chapter 3, described episodes of depression that recurred throughout her life. Louise described the depression in this way, “I used to say the pain the depression is a physical pain, sometimes you *hurt*.” She explains how she endured depression:

1	321	I’ve had a lot of pain,
2	321	I’ve had a lot of depression (sighs)
3	322	but um it’s I’ve just, I don’t know, I’ve I just thought

- 322 well I don't know how to go beyond
 4 322 how to get around *that* and
 323 [how to get around?]
 5 323 the depression
 6 323 proposition or how I just *lived with it and lived* with this
 324 [have you had depression throughout your life]
 7 324 yes yes as long as I can remember

Louise falters when trying to describe how she has coped with depression. She changes from to the present tense and asks, how did she, how does she live with depression? She does not know how she just lived with it, she just endured it.

Sexuality and Sexual Relations

Women said that the abuse affected their sexuality and sexual relations. They specifically traced to the abuse questions of identity, fear of sexual relations, unwanted sex, and problems with sexual response. Zella is a 65 year old lesbian who expressed questions about the abuse and her identity. Throughout the interview she questioned whether the abuse contributed to her sexual identity. She said, "so I really don't know how much some of those things would have contributed to what I became." When asked what she meant by "what she became," she replied being lesbian.

Women attributed a lifelong fear of sexual relations to the abuse. For example, Anne explained how the assault by her father affected her:

- 1 558 proposition it seemed to me as though I was *always* on a tight rope
 2 559 between seeing men as pathetic irresponsible big children
 559 or or potentially overpowering sex maniacs
 3 560 and that somewhere in the middle was was a decent
 560 vulnerable loving man
 4 560 who used sexuality as a means of loving
 5 560 but it seemed to me that little line was as *tiny as a thread*
 6 561 and that men on either side of that tiny line were either
 561 potential *rapists* or potential *wimps*

7 561 and of course I wanted nothing to do with either of those

As a consequence of the assault by her father, Anne was caught in tension. Her world became divided into two impossibilities: either men were unreliable, or they were dangerous. Somewhere between these two extremes there were a few decent, mature men who could be trusted sexually. Most, however, were threatening or untrustworthy.

Not only could the abuse engender fear of men, but it could also begin a pattern of sexual compliance and forced sex. Thus some women traded sex for affection and agreed to have sex when they did not want to. Lydia explains:

1 98 proposition what I learned from all of that was
 2 98 it's not OK to say no
 3 98 I didn't even know *how* to say no you know
 4 99 cause saying no in the feeble way I did didn't work
 5 99 and so I felt so *invaded* by him
 6 100 and and I didn't you know
 7 100 and and yet I really loved him
 8 100 and and I really liked his attention [um hmm]
 9 101 and I just didn't want him to touch me
 10 133 but I think that just this *whole* notion that I wasn't
 133 allowed to say no
 11 133 and that I wasn't allowed to assert myself
 134 and take care of myself
 12 134 and then *coupled* with my mother's constant um denial
 135 and negation of my feelings and my thoughts
 13 135 have been a lifetime problem
 136 [can you describe some of that as an adult? That problem
 136 as an adult]
 14 136 I've had lots of unwanted sex
 15 137 cause I thought I was supposed to,
 16 137 you know good dinner? want to?

After Lydia's mother indirectly confronted the cousin who abused her he left

Lydia alone for a while, but eventually he began touching her again. No one in the family

addressed his behavior as abuse. No one said his behavior was wrong. Lydia claims that she was invalidated by the inability of her parents to protect her from her cousin and by her mother's disregard for her feelings. She learned from this experience that saying no was ineffective and claims that she was sexually compliant as an adult because of this invalidation. She said, "I think it kept coming up I every time I said yes to somebody or ended up in bed even though I was silently saying no."

Other women also traced sexual compliance to the abuse. Susanna explained:

1	556	proposition	oh the pattern is that somehow I disconnected
2	556		from my body,
3	557		it didn't belong to me.
4	557		and that it was for use for others for <i>comfort</i>
5	557		and I got some kind of comfort from it
6	557		and um like that was an OK thing.
7	558		it was OK to be stepped on,
8	558		it was OK to be violated.
9	559		And those are words that we don't say

Susanna describes a global process of dissociation that occurred with "others," a noun that implies repetition. She proposes that she became disconnected from her body as a consequence of the abuse, and her body was then available for men's use or comfort. She uses the impersonal pronoun, "it," grammatically emphasizing her disembodiment. In the past, letting others use her body for their comfort was acceptable. This meant, however, that it was acceptable to be stepped on and violated. As a result of the abuse her body was not her own. In the last line, she switches to the present tense of the verb, indicating that the abuse and the repercussions are still not recognized, these are still "words we don't say."

Susanna said that abuse by her brother and father were related to other incidents of unwanted sex and told this story:

1	53	OR	I realized that there were a couple of
2	54	AB	I considered at least the first time I had sex as a um
	55		wasn't <i>rape</i> in the sense where someone forces themselves on you
3	55	EV	but I do believe that there is something there
4	56	EV	in that although I was in that car
5	56	EV	I was not with that person.
5	57	OR	My mind was back to where my father was on the floor, it was like
6	57	OR	and I hadn't been drinking
7	58	EV	but I was in like an emotional blackout
8	61	OR	and you know I'm just a kid
9	61	OR	you know I'm 16.
10	62	OR	All I could think of
11	63	CA	I remember I was so scared of my father
	63	EV	that I wasn't thinking what was going on
13	64	CA	that someone was touching me
14	64	EV	I was not, <i>passionate</i> or sexually pass or anything like that
15	65	EV	All I really wanted to was to be comforted
16	65	CA	and I was letting that person do to me what had been done on being <i>molested</i> by my brother
17	66	CA	doing the little things that he wanted me to do
18	66	EV	So I was in that frame of mind, <i>I I guess</i>
19	67	EV	But yet I wasn't really <i>there</i> , emotionally

Susanna was 16 and this was her first experience of sexual intercourse. Although it was not rape, she says, neither was it consensual sex. Looking back, Susanna understands now for the first time that this incident was not consensual sex. She was not a full participant in this encounter, but remembers that she was conscious then of the abuse by both her father and her brother. She let her boyfriend do to her what her brother had done as a means of getting comfort from him as this incident repeated the abuse.

Not only did women attribute sexual compliance and forced sex to the abuse, but with few exceptions women said that the abuse complicated their sexual response. Some women said that they just never liked sex. As Belinda said “I wished that I, that part between my legs didn’t exist.” Susanna felt guilty for experiencing pleasure during sexual abuse by her father. As a girl of 17 she vowed never to enjoy sex, and later was troubled by sexual problems in her marriage.

Lydia described how the abuse affected her sexual responses:

1	285	you know I had to get past that barrier before I could
	285	enjoy um sex
2	285	and I did enjoy it some
3	286	it was really hard to get over that that hump when I was
	286	starting out with someone [um hmm um hmm]
4	287	and um it did it came up every single time every time
5	287	it’s only been until recently uh the last few years that that
	288	barrier has come down and down and down
6	288	and I just don’t have to fight it
	289	[and the barrier is?]
7	289	the barrier is this tension that “I don’t want to have to do
	289	this
8	289	but I have to do this because”
	290	[the barrier is control?]
9	290	yeah yeah I mean I wanted to be there
10	290	but I didn’t want to be there
11	291	because I didn’t have a choice,
12	291	I felt like I was kind of roped into it [um hmm]
13	292	I mean I know I wasn’t
14	292	but that’s how it felt,
15	292	so that you know clenching my teeth tightening up finding
	293	a way to distract myself,
16	293	to talk myself into this is going to be OK
17	293	I’m going to live through it
18	294	and either I’m going to have say no
19	294	or I have to give into it one way or the other
20	295	couldn’t do either one until I sort of struggled with that
	295	barrier [um hmm]
21	295	and I mean the physical manifestation of that was

296 clinching my teeth,
 22 296 I can feel it I can just feel it (laughs)
 23 296 proposition and um like I said that was a whole lifelong response
 297 to not being empowered to speak up for myself to say no
 24 298 or to say no I don't want to do that
 25 298 not only sexually but in other ways too. [Uh hmm]
 26 299 had to go along had to be the good wife,
 27 299 had to be the good kid. Um
 28 299 and um never mind that I was furious about it. Um
 29 300 I didn't know that I was so angry until maybe the last 8 10
 300 years

Lydia was the compliant sexual partner, the good daughter, good wife, she says, without choosing how *she* wanted to define those roles. She was unable to say no, and without that ability she had no sexual control. Lydia's lifelong response of being unable to say no is reminiscent of Virginia's loss of voice in Chapter 3. Like Virginia, Lydia's disempowerment and resulting compliance created tension that then became a barrier to sexual satisfaction.

Besides sexual compliance, women also said that they were uncomfortable with sexual touching as a consequence of the abuse. Louise explained:

1 422 I wasn't as *sexual* as Luke would have liked me to have
 423 been
 2 423 and and I told him about
 3 423 that I had been abused
 4 424 and and he other than being very *angry*
 5 424 I don't think he knew how to deal with it
 6 425 and the two of us were in counseling for a little while
 7 425 but Luke um he never could understand the sense that,
 8 426 he never could understand that that part of me, that he
 426 was
 9 426 I I just would want a hug sometimes
 10 427 but and any touch from him was a sexual touch
 11 427 and it was the pat on the behind
 12 428 or the grab you by the boob
 13 428 and that just put me off

14 428 and I would say “don’t if you you can’t do that and expect
 429 me
 15 429 just to jump into b ”
 16 429 but I think this happens with a lot of men I so um
 433 [do you think that the abuse had *any* effect on your sexual
 433 response]
 17 434 proposition I think it probably made I mean
 18 434 I had a hard time having orgasms,
 19 434 I think it was all part of that
 20 435 I think um I
 21 435 I don’t know if it came from that
 22 435 or that in in my growing up sex was considered sort of
 436 you didn’t talk about it

Again Louise falters and hesitates as she explains that she has trouble having orgasms and that perhaps this trouble is a consequence of the abuse by her father and uncle. Although she told her husband about the abuse, she does not feel that he understood her, and his every touch continued to be a sexual touch. She hesitates, indicating that she is still not sure what the abuse meant and suggests another reason for her problem.

Like Virginia, Louise describes her husband as not understanding the impact of the abuse on her ability to respond sexually. Louise, like Virginia, wanted physical affection from her husband that was not sexual. She too asked that her husband touch her affectionately, not just sexually. Louise and her husband attempted counseling. Virginia and her husband spoke with their minister. Both women attribute the failure of their attempts to seek help to their husbands’ inability to accept their needs as valid. All women may need to be touched affectionately as well as sexually. It is possible that Luke’s failure to understand her is a consequence of his inability to understand touch in a

nonsexualized way. It is possible that he could only touch her in a stereotypically sexualized way. Perhaps he did not understand her need for physical affection without sexual intercourse. However, the consequence of his inability to listen to her and acknowledge her needs alienated her from him sexually.

Jean was abused by her uncle when she was 7 and explained the impact of that experience on her marriage:

1		you know we had a real conventional courtship I guess
2		and uh eventually we got into the sex end of it
3		and I never appreciated it much (starts to laugh)
4		but but uh (p) I could enjoy it you know,
		not cold though,
5		I had to have a lot of urging to get really into it,
6		but I never had any um trouble having orgasms or
		anything like that,
7	proposition	but I never really liked all the feely stuff because it
		reminded me of that guy [ohh]
8		I just I don't like that very much
9		and I always thought it was because of him,
10		the feeling that he'd made me have [um hmm]
11		and I think that's the main effect that he had on me
12		was (p) was that sort of yucky feeling you know

Although she could become aroused and have orgasms, genital touches reminded Jean of the “yucky feeling” she experienced when her great uncle touched her as a child. She said “I don't mind, you know, anything above the waist, that's fine.” She uses words like “never had,” “never liked,” and the present tense of the verb “like” (lines 7, 8) to indicate that she has always felt an aversion to being touched and still feels that way.

Jean explained that her feelings still affect her marriage. She and her husband have not had sex for a number of years, a consequence of husband's impotence from heart

medicine and vaginal dryness during menopause. Jean explained their current sexual relationship in this way:

- | | | | |
|----|-----|-------------|--|
| 1 | 452 | | we've got a good marriage, |
| 2 | 452 | | but it's just kind of companionate now |
| 3 | 453 | | our sex life just kind of came to an end [um hmm] |
| 4 | 453 | | and see this is something else too |
| 5 | 454 | proposition | if I hadn't had those childhood experiences, maybe I'd be |
| | 455 | | more open to physical fondling which is we could still do, |
| 6 | 455 | | but we don't I just I just turn off |
| 7 | 455 | | and and he's a touchy feely huggy person |
| 8 | 456 | | and it makes me feel bad |
| 9 | 456 | | but as long as he's willing to put up with it |
| 10 | 457 | | I'm I don't fight my disinclinations enough to overcome |
| | 457 | | them |

She has had a good marriage, Jean contends, but the abuse affected her sexual response. Although physical affection and touch are a form of sexual expression that she and her husband might experience, they do not because of her aversion to being touched. Sixty-two years later, she traces her dislike of physical fondling to the abuse she experienced at age seven.

Even when physical contact was not present, the psychological effect of sexual abuse would be quite negative. Cathy traced lifelong fear of intercourse to "psychological incest" by her father. She describes what happened in this story:

- | | | | |
|----|----|----|--|
| 2 | 58 | OR | but my first vivid memory is my being at the toilet |
| 3 | 59 | OR | and Dad being in the shower |
| 4 | 59 | OR | and we ran around in the raw at home |
| 5 | 59 | OR | Dad took us to nudist camps |
| 6 | 60 | OR | and so he was very um natural open, |
| 7 | 60 | OR | this is you know it's fine, |
| 8 | 60 | OR | the body is a wonderful thing |
| 9 | 61 | OR | and uh it's not to be ashamed of kind of attitude |
| 10 | 61 | CA | and I remember that he stepped out of the shower |
| 11 | 62 | CA | and said something to the effect of "I want you to see |

12 62 what a penis looks like, erected”
 12 63 OR and he was 6’5,” 6’4” and proportioned weight wise
 63 average,
 13 63 OR so a *big* man,
 14 63 OR and I was as tall as I am now,
 15 64 OR but weighed about 89,
 16 64 OR had pigtails down to my waist
 17 64 OR and braces on my teeth,
 18 65 OR and couldn’t talk straight,
 19 65 OR and did not have a good image of myself, [um hmm]
 20 66 OR and I don’t remember if there was probably some talk
 66 preceding this,
 21 66 OR before he got out of the shower, I don’t, there probably
 67 was,
 22 67 OR because he was more sensitive than just to pop that,
 23 68 EV but I remember being absolutely horrified,
 24 68 OR it was red and *huge*,
 25 68 OR and kind of out at this kind of an angle,
 26 69 CA and I don’t think I said much,
 27 69 CA but I’m sure he saw the expression on my face
 28 70 R and I don’t think we ever discussed that, after that event

The time was 1939 and Cathy had reached puberty, the reason her father attempted to educate her about a man’s anatomy. Although she provides ample reasons to believe her father’s sincerity in trying to help her, she also indicates that the sight of her father naked, with an erection, frightened her immensely. She explains:

1 424 proposition I probably would have been more curious about
 425 intercourse
 2 425 and probably sought a relationship actively,
 3 425 but you see this speech was a hamper to that too and a
 426 hamper to my feelings,
 4 426 so it’s hard to say
 426 [you talked about being afraid of men, afraid of, was it,
 428 can you talk a little bit about that]
 5 428 afraid of intercourse, [ah ha]
 6 429 feeling that it would be terribly painful and terrifying
 429 [um hmm, um hmm, OK]
 7 429 and I think it was the size
 8 430 and then uh the fact that I had no um

9	430	I think my Dad did say uh the vagina is slippery and et
	430	cetera.
10	431	but that really didn't make any impact

As a consequence of this incident with her father, Cathy avoided relationships with men because she was terrified that intercourse would be painful. In many ways, Cathy's description of abuse is different than the rest of the women in this study. Many of the abusers claimed that the abuse was for the child's benefit. Belinda's father claimed that she "was his favorite" i.e., he was doing her a favor. Cathy can describe her father's attributions for "her education" as innocent, because no force or physical contact occurred. However, her story at the same time illustrates the impact of her father's naive gesture, as opposed to the selfish manipulation by Belinda's father. Cathy is 70 years old and this incident generated a lifelong fear of intercourse.

Lost opportunities

Women traced many lost opportunities to the sexual abuse. Three women said, as did Belinda in chapter 3, that the abuse interfered with their ability to work and traced their current impoverishment to problems from the abuse. Women also felt that they lost their childhood. Anne said "I don't think I had a childhood for that matter. I don't remember really being, I remember being small and young, but I don't remember being a child." When the abuser was someone that the child cared for, she lost that person in her life. Lydia, who described the abuse by her cousin, said "the worst part of it was that he was my *favorite* cousin." He was the only man in the family who did active, athletic, things with Lydia like biking and sailing. She lost his companionship and mentoring

ability, however, because she could not trust him not to use her for his own (and not her) sexual pleasure.

Intervening Factors

Women attributed to the sexual abuse a myriad of problems and some positive lessons. Some of these effects were modified by certain conditions. For example, Christian education or training exacerbated the negative effects of the abuse. On the other hand, parental belief and validation mitigated those effects.

Exacerbating Factors

Christian Education

Christian education complicated the guilt that some women felt about the abuse. The knowledge that that sex was sinful conflicted with their awareness of the sexual abuse that occurred at home. Alice, for example, felt confused and troubled by the contradiction between her parents' religious values and their attitudes towards sex and their behavior toward her. Belinda talked about the guilt she felt learning that people went to hell for sin, and knowing that what went on at home was wrong. She said "I always had this *dichotomy* you know always trying to be a good little girl and always feeling like what I'm doing is a bad little girl." Christian education or training then resulted in an unexplained and irreconcilable contradiction with their experience of the abuse.

Zella was raised by her grandmother after her mother died. She said that her religious education created feelings of guilt and inadequacy. She elaborates in the following explanation and narrative.

2 25 very religious, Seventh Day Adventist,
 3 25 so that from her I probably picked up a lot of legalistic uh
 26 judgmental things,
 4 26 it's very easy for me to pass judgment on people
 5 27 and of course they are very religious people too,
 6 28 and so I I uh inherited a lot of *that* I was
 7 28 proposition but it was always that I was never quite good enough,
 8 29 she had Victorian ideas as far as sex was concerned
 9 29 she told me several times after I was grown that I should
 39 be ashamed
 10 30 because my husband saw me without my clothes on
 11 31 because Mister, now Mister Tarey,
 31 she never, well once and a while she would call him
 31 by his first name
 12 32 but most of the time "Mister Tarey, *never* saw me
 32 without my clothes," [we laugh] (p)

Zella claims that her grandmother, who was religious and judgmental, tried to instill strict ideas of right and wrong, particularly about sexuality. Growing up under her grandmother's influence, Zella proposes that she felt she was not good enough.

After explaining this background, Zella told a story about the first time she was sexually abused:

1 38 CA TJ came over (p)
 2 38 OR and I was I was sick, not able to go to school
 3 39 OR and my uncle was there,
 4 39 OR and I don't know where he was,
 5 40 OR he evidently wasn't in the room
 7 40 CA when TJ put his hand under the blankets,
 8 40 OR I was sleeping on the couch or something (5)
 9 41 CA I couldn't say anything about this
 10 41 EV because I had already I guess begun to believe
 11 42 EV that my grandmother thought that I was not good
 12 42 EV and I knew that what TJ did with his fingers was not
 43 good, (p)
 13 43 R so I could not say anything though

Zella was 5 or 6 years old when a friend of her uncle's molested her. She states, as if it were a fact, that she could not tell anyone what happened. Zella knew that what this man did was wrong but because her grandmother did not believe she was a good child, she was afraid that she would be blamed for the abuse. For Zella, Alice, and Belinda, Christian influence created confusion about sin and exacerbated guilt that they felt about the abuse.

Mitigating Factors

Validation of the child's experience mitigated or lessened the effects of the abuse.

Parental Validation

Although some parents ignored and discounted abuse, other parents protected the child from the abuser. Sometimes parents quietly separated the abuser from the child. For example, Alice's parents protected her from the uncle who tried to molest her when she was three. She said, "I don't know what they did, they didn't do it in *my* presence but *he* never came back." Jean said that her mother made sure that she never saw great uncle Larry again. Some parental efforts were more direct. Lydia, a 58 year old woman, told this story

1	74	AB	I remember this one time
2	74	OR	I must have been around I don't know 12, 13 um
3	75	AB	and I said " <i>I am not going</i> " to whatever the event was I
	75		don't remember, um
4	76	AB	"I'm not going, I'm just not going"
5	76	OR	I mean I used to fantasize about just <i>smashing</i> him in the
	76		mouth
6	77	OR	and I'd say "Joe get away" you know and stuff like that
7	77	OR	but that didn't mean a thing it
8	77	OR	he just laughed
9	78	CA	and uh I remember telling my mother "I'm not going"

10 78 EV and she was so shocked
 11 79 EV because these family gatherings were a big deal to all of
 79 us including me
 12 79 EV so for me to say I wasn't going
 13 80 EV that was you know
 14 80 CA she stopped and listened
 15 80 OR and I said it was because I didn't want to deal with Joe.
 16 81 OR I just was sick and tired of that
 17 81 OR and he was never going to stop
 18 82 OR and I didn't like being I didn't like it when he stuck his
 82 tongue in my mouth
 19 82 OR and I didn't like it when I don't remember what words I
 83 used
 20 83 CA and she said "Oh I'll just have to talk to Fran about that"
 83 Joe's wife. [Um hmm]
 21 84 EV and I thought well that's just crazy why don't you just call
 84 him
 22 84 EV and say "keep your fucking hands off my kid" you know
 23 85 OR I just learned the word fuck then [we laugh]
 24 85 OR my mother would never say that
 25 86 OR but that was my fantasy you know
 26 86 OR I couldn't say it so she should be able to say it
 27 87 CA and um he she did call him call Fran
 28 87 CA and um she told me that she Fran said she would talk to
 88 Joe
 29 88 CA and get him to leave me me alone
 30 88 CA and that it was really bothering me
 31 88 CA so I said "*right* and I don't believe it"
 32 89 CA and she said "you stay stick around me and if anything
 89 happens I'll know it
 33 90 CA and then I'll say something"
 34 90 EV anyway I did want to go
 35 90 CA so I did go
 36 90 R and for about the next 3 or 4 or 2 or 3 or 4 gatherings
 37 91 R he did leave me alone

Lydia refused to go to a family gathering because she could no longer stand to be around her cousin who began touching her sexually when she was 10 or 11. Although she cannot remember the occasion for the gathering, she remembers refusing to go. She had

resisted this cousin's advances, and told him to leave her alone, but he was relentless, she said. When Lydia finally refused to go to a family gathering, her mother took steps to protect her. Lydia wanted her mother to confront Joe openly but her mother handled the matter indirectly. Her intervention worked for a while, but Lydia's resolution contains a hint of contradiction because eventually he began to molest her again.

Lydia's mother tried to stop the abuse indirectly. In only one of the narratives did parents seek help from the authorities: Irene told this story:

1	25	AB	we're talking about sexual abuse
2	26	OR	and it's around that time
3	26	OR	that a little girlfriend of mine in grade school, third grade,
	26		I think,
4	27	OR	she and I played together all the time
5	27	CA	and I went over to her house to see if she could play after
	27		school.
6	28	CA	Well daddy answered the door
7	28	CA	and said that what's her name I think, it wasn't Sue, but
	29		Sylvia, and her Mom were gone,
8	29	CA	but come in cause they'll be right home, they,
9	29	OR	he was a pharmacist
10	30	OR	and they lived, you went up the back way into the house
11	30	OR	and then when you went into the kitchen there was a door
12	31	OR	that opened <i>right</i> into their drug store,
13	31	CA	so we sat down at the kitchen table
14	32	CA	and he said "here I'll make you a snack"
15	32	CA	made a peanut butter sandwich,
16	32	CA	we sat there
17	33	CA	<i>and</i> he put his hands <i>right</i> inside my underwear up into
	33		my vagina,
18	33	CA	well I can remember sitting munching on this sandwich,
19	34	CA	and I do remember saying " <i>do you do this</i> with Sylvia,"
20	35	CA	and you know I can't remember whether he said yes or
	35		no,
21	35	CA	but a client walked into the drugstore right then
22	36	CA	he got up, walked into the store right then
23	36	CA	and I <i>shot</i> out that house, <i>down</i> the stairs and went home.
24	37	OR	I don't remember <i>exactly</i> what symptoms I exhibited,

25 37 OR but it was enough that grandma called mother to come
38 home from work.
26 38 EV I *think* what I remember is I was hysterical,
27 38 EV I was throwing up,
28 39 EV and I was *either* bright red or dead white, I can't
39 remember,
29 39 EV but it was a *really big deal*,
30 40 OR um this man was a very uh *big* guy in the church, he was
40 an usher
31 40 OR and of course he was a professional man
32 41 OR and so he was *highly* regarded,
33 41 OR well I didn't have my Dad then um
34 41 CA but mother phoned the Dad of another girlfriend who had
42 known this family many more years than we did
35 42 CA and they talked about it
36 43 CA and then they talked about it I *think* uh with the parish
43 priest, um
37 43 EV and it was kind of decided that it was unfortunate uh
38 44 CA and then they did talk to this man, uh
39 44 R and that was the end of it
40 45 R as far as I mean you didn't do anything else,
41 45 R that was it

Irene was eight or nine years old at the time of the story. She was molested by her girlfriend's father, but got away when she could, and ran home. She emphasizes that this was a *big deal*, although she can not remember the specific symptoms. Irene's mother not only believed her daughter, but she took public steps to stop the abuser. Irene recognizes her mother's courage in confronting an important man in the community. There was no punishment for this man, but Irene claims that her mother did all she could, there were no other avenues to pursue. Irene tells her story with ease and composure, a contrast to the hysteria that she experienced as a result of the incident when she was a child.

She later explains what she learned from the experience:

1 45 and *that* is my big story of sexual abuse
2 46 um I was thinking now

3	46		how did that, did that color my life,
4	46		did that do something
5	47		and the reason I led into this is cause I by saying I was
	47		lovingly anticipated, very highly regar,
6	48		I got everything I ever wanted,
7	48		even though we was <i>poor</i> , you know, [um hmm]
8	49		mother <i>had</i> to work,
9	49		we always struggled, um (7)
10	49	proposition	I don't know that that made me feel like a particular
	50		victim
11	50		probably because fortunately I I <i>communicated</i> to
	50		everybody

Irene has wondered how the abuse may have influenced her. She began her life story emphasizing that she felt loved, cared for, and highly regarded. Her family not only cared for her, they protected her, and validated her. She was not victimized by the abuse, she proposes, because she told her mother and grandmother and they responded.

Irene's experience is a striking contrast to the experience of other women in this study. Jean disclosed the abuse to her mother who protected her from further contact with her great uncle. Alice's parents made sure that the uncle who abused her when she was three did not come back to their house. Lydia's mother addressed the cousin's behavior through his wife and the abuse stopped for a short time. In each instance the parent protected the child from the abuser, but did so without talking to the child. They did not explain that the abuser was not to be trusted again, that the child was not at fault. And that they could resist other advances and tell their parents. Although the child was protected from that perpetrator, they were not provided with a clear validation of their innocence, nor were they taught any skills that would later enable them to protect themselves from other sexual threats. Alice endured subsequent abuse. Another great

uncle attempted to molest Jean when she was nine. She said “I just sat there like a I was just rigid, all I could think of was what’s going to happen you know, maybe if I don’t do anything it will go away you know. And uh I guess eventually he gave up.” The secrecy that surrounded the abuse was confusing. Alice did not learn that it was wrong for someone to touch her sexually nor did she learn to come to her parents for protection. Although Jean was able to resist the second uncle’s advances, she did so out of fear, not out of confidence.

Immediately after recounting the abuse, Irene told two stories with a theme of warding off unwanted sexual advances. For example:

1	51	AB	interestingly enough
2	51	OR	then when I was 16,
3	51	OR	I dated a man who was older than I,
4	52	OR	and I think I did that a lot,
5	52	OR	because my father was granddad for a lot of years,
6	52	OR	and in fact I finally married a man 10 years older,
7	53	OR	but uh went out with this guy a few times,
8	53	EV	and I <i>knew</i> he wasn’t a a really good person,
9	54	EV	I think I had a hunch,
10	54	EV	but I think I was at 16,
11	54	EV	just sort of feeling terribly important
12	55	EV	and big,
13	55	EV	and <i>loved</i>
14	55	EV	and no harm would ever come to me,
15	55	CA	and I remember one time we went out
16	56	OR	and coming back
17	56	CA	and we parked
18	56	CA	and we necked
19	56	CA	and he <i>got</i> all of a sudden very physical <i>forceful</i>
20	57	EV	and uh I think he really <i>wanted</i> um intercourse very badly
21	57	EV	and um I suppose maybe today you could call that
22	58	EV	<i>attempted rape</i> , you know [um hmm um hmm]
23	58	CA	but poor thing, I screamed and fought and yelled
	59		and made his life so miserable for about 10 minutes
24	59	CA	that he got <i>totally</i> disgusted and took me home,

25 60 R which he should have

Irene describes her confidence (lines 11-14) at 16. She emphasizes her date's forcefulness, and the strength of her response: she was in the right; he was in the wrong. She sums up the story in the coda: giving up was what he should have done. Irene was not victimized by that experience, instead she "found that if something came up I could handle it." She offers this story as an example of what she learned from the abuse. This is a success story because she learned that the abuse was wrong, that she was not to blame for it, and that it was right and proper that she act to protect herself as others had acted to protect her in the past.

Abuse and Gender

The women in this study traced many negative effects to the sexual abuse that they experienced in childhood. It is difficult to separate out many of these effects from their experience of growing up female in this country during the 1920's through the 1950's because gender roles parallel and overlap the effects of the abuse. Several described opportunities that they lost because they were raised as women in the early part of the century. Susanna said that "I look at my daughter now and see I wish I could have done some things different and been more, um, not lived so much of my life on a back burner." Jean said that the effects of the sexual abuse was limited to her sexual response. She said however, that growing up as a girl meant lost opportunities. She explained:

1	624	proposition	I wish I had matured earlier, mentally speaking,
2	625		my mother protected us so,
3	625		and she was she was not a sophisticated person,
4	626		and uh the idea was that I would grow up and get married
5	626		and it was never that I would grow up and be something.

6 627 I was fairly artistic, I think I could have gone into some
 627 form of art.
 7 628 maybe commercial art of something,
 8 628 I'm not that creative, um
 9 628 or I could have been a scientist,
 10 629 but they didn't encourage girls to do that
 11 629 and it never occurred to me to think I could be anything,
 630 either.
 12 630 Until I went back to college
 13 630 and realized that I had a good brain,
 14 631 and I see the way that people work together
 15 631 and I think I could do that better than that you know
 16 632 and I wish I'd had the opportunity to try myself more
 17 632 I did have a good job at the university,
 18 633 I never did get the librarian degree
 19 633 although I could have,
 20 633 after I went to work at the university
 21 634 they would allow you time to go get that degree
 22 634 and we were living in Seattle then
 23 634 I could have done it
 24 635 and you know you have to take that exam to get into
 635 graduate school
 25 635 and I was afraid of the math,
 26 636 I'd never had any new math
 27 636 and so I never took the test,
 28 636 I was so old it wouldn't have paid off monetarily,
 29 637 but it would have been something that I could have been
 637 proud of
 30 637 and I'm sorry I didn't do it,

Jean felt that she was not encouraged intellectually because she was a girl. Her mother's expectation was that she would marry, not work, societal expectations excluded art and science for girls. Therefore she had talents or abilities that she did not develop. It was not until she returned to school after her children left home, when she was in her 50's, that she realized that she was capable. Even then, however, her previous schooling and lack of confidence limited her. She, like many women, was afraid of the math test on

the graduate entrance exams, and that fear prevented her from getting an advanced degree. Looking back, she realizes that she is sorry that she lost an opportunity for self development and expression.

Angela described the differential expectations for her and her brother. He was encouraged intellectually, she was not. Her achievements in school were ignored because she was a girl, she claims, while her brother's achievements were recognized. She explained:

1	83		I used to lie on my belly in the fields
2	83		and look at insects
3	84		and sneak honey out there or molasses or uh whatever I
	84		could, a piece of cake,
4	85		and I think had I known the word science,
5	85	proposition	had anybody ever talked to me you know my this would
	85		have been my great <i>love</i> ,
6	86		both of my boys are scientists
7	86		and it's not because I ever directed them that way,
8	87		it's because I kept little bugs in jars all over the house you
	87		know
9	87		when they were growing up
10	88		and um I respected their intelligence
11	88		and we always were looking things up
12	88		so I'm very proud of their academic and my daughter
13	89		I'm very proud of their academic world
14	89		but when I was growing up
15	89		I remember my my memories of this <i>silence</i>
16	90		uh I cou always being a bad girl

Angela contrasts the way that she encouraged and supported her children's intellectual development with the silence and admonishments that she remembers from her childhood. She lacked that opportunity, because her family did not recognize and

encourage that part of her although they did encourage and support the intellectual development of her brother.

Irene, who did not feel victimized by the incident of sexual abuse when she was eight, said however, "I think that I felt victimized *by the status of the wife, the woman in the household, the running of the household.....* I think that during the time that I was married I felt powerless." She explained:

1	98	my husband had his own business,
2	98	I had been in business,
3	99	I had worked up until we were married,
4	99	and um I felt our business was going down,
5	100	and a lot of of the economics of the area affected um my
	101	husband's business,
6	101	but also I didn't really <i>agree</i> with some of his ideas for
	101	marketing
7	102	for um what product item services things like that,
8	102	<i>but</i> it was <i>his business</i> , not ours,
9	102	and so I could never say [um hmm]
10	103	so um about two years before he died
11	103	I <i>knew</i> that he wasn't well,
12	104	I knew that we were getting less and less um sound
	104	economically
13	104	so I went back to work, um
14	105	and even that didn't give me the a status as a decision
	105	maker,
15	105	<i>even though</i> we certainly liked my pay check, (laughs)
16	106	you know and that I knew I was contributing very much
17	106	proposition so um those are a couple of areas where I think I felt less
	107	than equal

As a wife, Irene says that her opinions about business and family finances were discounted, even though she had some expertise. Even when she went to work, and even though her paycheck was needed and recognized, she did not earn the status of equal partner in financial decisions.

Anne said that when she was young societal expectations for girls when she was young created a sense of invalidation or injustice. The assault by her father when she was 14 solidified that the injustice and extended it to victimization. She explained:

1	56		when I was very young I wanted
2	56		I <i>detested</i> the thought of being a woman, um
3	57		I thought when I was very young girls were powerless
4	57		that no matter how much brains they had
5	58		or how much courage
6	58		or how much integrity
7	58		or no matter what girls or women had going for them
8	59		they were never going to have any opportunity that would
	59		bring them the kind of um gratification um in their own
	60		abilities and achievements that men had
9	60		and I was <i>very very</i> angry about being a girl,
10	61		I thought being a girl was being a <i>gyp</i>
11	61		and um in some ways I still feel that way,
12	61		but but um not like I did when I was a child
13	62		when I was a child I was just <i>furious</i> at the injustice of
	63		having been born a girl
14	66		I was just <i>livid</i> about it
15	67	proposition	and then of course the assault by my father at the very
	67		time that my um sexual identity was becoming apparent
	68		really um uh solidified in my mind the injustice of being a
	68		girl
16	69		who not only was not going to be allowed the
	69		opportunities that boys were,
17	69		but who were going to be victims all their lives
	70		by some <i>oppressive man</i> .

Even before the abuse by her father, Anne asserts, she hated being a girl because girls had less power, fewer opportunities, and received less respect for their intellectual abilities than boys did. The abuse by her father not only confirmed what she perceived to be an injustice, but it introduced a new aspect of being female: victimization and sexual

oppression. The assault by her father when she was 14 exacerbated the conflict that she felt with the societal expectations of being a woman.

Some women like Jean and Irene felt that they lost opportunities or felt victimized by the confining societal expectations for women. Angela and Anne tie together the impact of those expectations and the assaults by their grandfather and father respectively. The abuse became part of the devaluation that they felt because of the way societal expectations negatively influenced family treatment of female children. Lydia, in trying to sum up the effects of the abuse, connected both conditions, "it's been a lot of years of responding to my family and the sexual abuse and to the roles that women get settled with in this society, all that mixed together."

Summary

Women defined sexual abuse as sexual contact and habitual verbal comments about their bodies. Certain family norms or conditions facilitated the abuse. For example, silence that surrounded the abuse allowed it to continue. Silence was a consequence of family norms about talking, fear of negative consequences, and the lack of responsive, accepting adults. The power differential between children and adults also facilitated the abuse by discouraging disclosure. Parental absence, or non-involvement left the child without protection or someone to confide in. Traditional gender roles and the lack of maternal affirmation also facilitated the abuse by undermining the child's confidence.

Women linked feelings of self-blame, negative feelings about the self, impaired sexual functioning, and lost opportunities to the abuse. Two women described positive

outcomes to the abuse: an increased protectiveness of children and insights into the needs of children for love and affection.

Christian education or influence exacerbated the guilt that some children felt about the abuse. Factors that mitigated the effects of the abuse included parental validation and the willingness to act on a daughter's behalf.

It is difficult to separate the experience of sexual abuse from the experience of growing up female for many of these women. They described not being encouraged intellectually as children and not being valued in the role of wife. Thus the societal roles negatively affected some women and overlapped the effects of the abuse for others.

Many of the women in this study have found ways to cope with the emotional impact of the abuse. They tell their stories with composure and emotional control. Others, particularly Louise and Virginia, are still struggling with questions about the meaning of the abuse in their lives. Louise repeats the phrase "I don't know," over and over in response to her questions of her past. Her hesitations and faltering are clues to the continuing impact of the abuse.

Angela describes her entire childhood as silent. Anne echoed her stepmother's silence after the attack by her father and did not say anything. Their narratives illustrate, as did Virginia's in Chapter 4, that talking about one's experience is necessary in order to develop one's voice. Their stories also illustrate that being heard requires more than just a voice, being heard requires someone to listen and to hear.

The three complete life stories (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) illustrate that child sexual abuse can reverberate across middle age into old age. The narratives of the women in this chapter also indicate that sexual abuse can impact women across their lives. It is not just habitual abuse that adversely affected these women. Jean was vaginally touched once or twice by her great uncle, but she traces current sexual problems to that experience. Cathy's father exposed himself to her in early adolescence. The experience left her with a lifelong fear of intercourse. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that sexual abuse does not automatically result in permanently damaging effects. Some of the women in this study have developed remarkable ways of coping with the abuse. Other women still struggle with the residue of it in their lives. In the next chapter I will examine the ways that the women in this study have coped with the abuse.

Chapter 8

Child Sexual Abuse Across the Life Course: Strategies of Coping

Introduction

Women described the effects of the abuse as a lifelong experience and the ways that they coped with it reflect this life course perspective. The strategies they have used to cope with the effects of the abuse fall into five broad categories: endurance, gaining a voice, making choices, overcoming the past, and forgiveness. This chapter describes each of these strategies in more detail.

Endurance

All of the women endured the abuse as children. While Virginia was able to successfully resist the abuse by her uncles, she endured years of sexual touches by her father. Although several women have continued to endure the effects, some of them have found other ways to cope. Endurance then is a strategy of coping that all of the women have used at one time or another, and that some women continue to use. Endurance is made up of silence, acquiescence, perseverance, and faith.

Silence

For many of the women in this study silence was an enabling factor that allowed the abuse to continue. They did not talk in detail about the abuse until middle age or early old age when they began to cope with the effects of it. For example, Virginia was 43 when she had a confrontation with her father and broke off relations with him. She then contacted a minister and told him about the abuse. Alice was admonished as a child not to talk about problems to people outside the family. She did not talk about the abuse as an

adult because she did not think anyone would understand. She said “I think if somebody hasn’t gone through it they don’t know what you’re talking about.” She remained silent about the abuse until she was 62 and sought counseling for depression.

Some women still do not talk about their experience and this silence is part of enduring the effects of the abuse. Although Louise has talked about the abuse with her sisters in an attempt to understand her past, she said “I don’t share this sexual abuse very much because people– I don’t know how they will look at it.” She traced sexual problems to the abuse, but did not talk in detail about it. Louise asks many unresolved questions about the impact of the abuse in her life throughout her interview. For example, she said:

1	451	I was never a very sexually turned on person
2	451	and I don’t know where I would have been without this
3	452	whether it would have been the same
4	452	because I can’t I don’t know where to draw the line,
5	453	and I haven’t talked about it,
6	453	maybe if I had gone into counseling more I could
7	454	have figured it out more
8	454	but um it all was just a part of being married
9	454	and it was something that you did

This is not an explanation, because Louise does not know what the abuse has meant to her. Instead she asks this question. She was not sexually responsive, was it because of the abuse? She does not understand the impact of the abuse in her life because she has never talked about it. When she was younger she thought her sexual response was just part of married life but now she is not sure. Silence about the abuse has allowed her to endure, but has left her with unanswered and unresolved questions.

Jean traced a discomfort of vaginal touching to the abuse she experienced as a child, but she, like Louise, did not talk about it or seek help. She said, “it makes me feel bad, but as long as he’s [her husband] willing to put up with it, I’m I don’t fight my disinclinations enough to overcome them.” Zella did not tell her grandmother when she was abused by the friend of her uncle, or by another uncle. She links silence about the abuse to another kind of silence in this explanation:

1	51		I never told them
2	51		I never even discussed it with my grandmother
3	51		even when she said “I wonder if he’s messing with his
		51	daughters”
4	51		I had a perfect opportunity to say “ <i>yeah</i> , he messed with
		51	me”
5	52		but then I’d be back to being a bad child
6	52	proposition	so I’ve always been a compliant person

Zella did not tell anyone about the abuse by her uncle because she was afraid she would be blamed for it. She claims that she could not relate or tell others what happened to her and still be accepted. Zella sums up this experience, and uses the words “so” and “always” to trace a lifelong pattern of not speaking up to a fear of being unfairly and negatively judged.

Zella said that disclosing her sexual identity has always been risky. First she told this story:

1	377	AB	I’ve had some very very bad hurts,
2	377	OR	when my grandmother died
3	377	CA	I went I went back there to her funeral
4	378	OR	my mother’s brother, the only brother she had, has two
		378	sons that are gay, two, (p)
5	379	OR	my grandmother had experiences when she was young
		379	[with women?]
6	380	OR	yes [uh hmm] probably nobody told her about women

7 380 OR so she'd just given men the,
 8 381 CA but *he* treated me very *coldly*
 9 381 EV and I thought are you blaming me for your sons,
 10 381 EV it's not my fault,
 11 382 EV I didn't pick out their grandparents,
 12 382 EV if I had of I would have gone someplace else myself (p)
 13 383 CO but it's not you know (p) that's really not something that
 383 you have any control over

Zella makes two points with this story. First, it is an example of the pain and rejection that she has unfairly experienced throughout her life. The story consists of only two events, she returned home for her grandmother's funeral and her uncle was unfriendly and cold. She repeats her thoughts at the time, did he blame her because his sons are gay? She traces their sexual identity to their grandmother, making the claim that she is not responsible for hers or their sexual identity. Zella also makes the point that she responded to her uncle in the same way that she responded to the abuse, with silence. The conversation that she repeats to her uncle is a silent one, it is spoken only to me now, these are not words that she said to her uncle.

Zella went on to explain why she responds with silence, why she is guarded about disclosing her sexual identity:

1 384 and so you go through life (p)
 2 384 I I have I think I've probably been a person that I mean
 3 384 sure I don't run up and down the sidewalk hollering ,
 385 "I'm gay, I'm gay, I'm gay"
 4 385 no I'm not gay, just a lesbian, so just an old lesbian,
 5 386 I think people go through life
 6 388 and they show little sides of themselves (p)
 7 389 I think a lot of time people say "well (p) if I show them
 389 myself they won't love me anymore"
 8 389 and when I say love I use the word as trust, care, friend
 390 (p)
 9 390 and so you open yourself up to all,

10 390 proposition it's sort of like having a treasure that you put away
 11 391 and you only show it to some people
 12 391 because (p) you don't think they'll like you anymore

Zella links the lack of acceptance by others to a lack of self acceptance. She is 65, and has endured rejection all of her life for being lesbian. She said several times in her interview that "I had a lot of guilt from my sexual lifestyle." She has kept who she is "put away" for fear of rejection. Silence is part of her survival strategy, but it is also part of being "compliant," of "fitting in," of not discomfoting others, of being unable to say who she is.

Angela described silence in her family as an enabling factor in the abuse by her grandfather. That silence and the differential treatment for her brother created feelings of inadequacy that the abuse confirmed. These patterns, perceived inadequacy and silence, were repeated in her marriage. She told three stories with the same theme and the same resolution: she did not receive recognition for her accomplishments, and she was admonished by her husband for asking for it. This is the first story:

1 468 OR I went to a library somewhere
 2 468 CA and looked up all the *horror* stuff that happened in the south,
 3 468 OR particularly to women,
 4 469 CA and I wrote a documentary
 5 469 OR from the Freedom Bus Rides in the early fifties to
 469 Malcolm X and the sixties,
 6 470 CA and we did it for the Unitarian church
 7 470 OR and a lot of the Hollywood types were in it,
 8 471 OR it was it was real easy,
 9 471 OR it was a stand up microphone, um
 10 471 OR Carson McCullers all these people would talk you know
 11 472 OR and then the *good* music,
 12 472 OR the spirituals that were updated, [um hmm]
 13 473 OR it was a real swinging, uh 45 minutes

14	473	OR	and “if you miss me at the back of the bus, you don’t see
	474		me nowhere, I’ll be sitting at the front of the bus”
15	474	OR	all the spirituals were rewritten by so and so,
16	475	OR	whom I later met, um
17	475	CA	it was done in Hollywood professionally,
18	475	CA	I read about it in the paper
19	476	CA	and I said to Al, “My god, I should get some credit for
	476		this.”
20	476	R	He shamed me, “don’t be so greedy.” (whispers)

Angela tells a story that contrasts her accomplishments with her sense of invisibility. She claims credit for this play– it was her idea and her production. Although her work achieved professional recognition, she was not given credit for it. Angela felt entitled to recognition, but her husband admonished her for speaking up, for wanting validation. She said later, “I just felt like *again*, because of my probably grandfather, because of the *shame* and the *silence*, I thought “God what did I do wrong, you know. Am I greedy cause I want some recognition?”

Acquiescence

Acquiescence is also part of endurance. Several women who were unable to resist the abuse began a pattern of acquiescence that was repeated in their adult relationships. For example, Alice suggested that she had little power or control in her marriages. Virginia claimed that her husband had more control in decision making and finances. Susanna described her husband as controlling and said “in all those 27 years of marriage, Tom drove let me drive the car *with him in it* 5 times. I remember all 5 occasions. Because I was not capable of driving a car. (p5) He had to be in control.”

Louise also described a pattern of acquiescence that began when her father sexually abused her and that continued with her husband, and then with her son. She described the abuse:

1	50	CO	after my mother died and my
2	50	CO	it was my sister next to me
3	51	CO	and my father
4	51	CO	slept in a bed
5	51	CO	and I was then about 12
6	51	CA	and I remember waking up at night with his penis just
	52		rubbing up against me
7	52	CA	and then he would ejaculate
8	52	CA	and I would be all wet,
9	53	CA	but I would pretend I was sleeping
10	53	EV	because I didn't know what to do
11	53	EV	I was just um I was <i>afraid</i> of my father for one thing
12	54	EV	and I didn't know what to do
13	54	OR	there was no one I could talk to or
14	55	CA	so I would just wait a little while
15	55	CA	and then I'd get up
16	55	CA	and go to the bathroom
17	55	CA	and try to dry myself off

Louise endured the abuse by her father by pretending to be asleep. She emphasizes her helplessness, and repeats that she did not know what to do. She justifies her acquiescence: she was young, she was afraid of her father, she had no one who could help her.

Louise said “from the time I can remember I was told that I would never marry I would stay at home and be with him.” She stayed home until she was 24, and said “I should have left home before that, but again, I was just sort of under my father’s control.” She told this habitual narrative to illustrate:

1	440	OR	I never had any <i>money</i> I never
2	440	CA	and even though I <i>baby-sat and earned</i> money

3 441 CA I had I gave it all to him
 4 441 EV and I often look back on that
 5 442 OR because then as my sisters came along and they had jobs,
 6 442 OR they didn't do that they
 7 442 OR they *kept* their money
 8 443 CA whereas I just handed
 9 443 CA I would work
 10 443 CA and hand over everything I *earned* to him
 11 444 EV and he just sort of thought that was his right to have the
 444 money
 12 444 OR and it wasn't until I was out of school
 13 445 CA he started giving me like \$2.00 a week and then maybe
 445 \$5.00 a week
 14 445 OR and it's like I gradually got to keep a little more,
 15 446 OR but for a long time I just never had any money

Louise emphasizes her agency and her ability. At the same time she underscores her father's control, "his right" and her acquiescence, "I never had," "I gave it all." She contrasts her behavior with her sisters to show that this was not just a matter of her father's dominance, she gave in to him. Money allows choice and control, and she implies that she had none as a child. Even when she graduated from high school she did not keep all of the money that she earned. Louise does not resolve this story, because the issue of her father's control and her acquiescence to him was not resolved until much later in her life.

Louise said that her husband had more control in their marriage. She explained:

1 84 I married a very controlling um man uh
 2 84 but who was a very *nice* person
 3 84 proposition he just liked to be in control [um hmm] um
 4 85 and about half way through our marriage
 5 85 I got a little more assertive
 6 85 and he didn't like it at all um (sighs)
 7 86 but I I let him control a lot
 8 86 because it didn't really matter I guess
 9 87 and he wasn't ever really um he never was physical

10 87 he just needed to be in control
 11 87 he didn't want me to work um
 12 88 and he wouldn't even let me get unemployment when I
 88 when we first moved
 13 89 and I could have signed up for unemployment
 14 89 he wouldn't let me do it
 15 89 cause he just wanted to be the one that was the provider

Louise married a man whom she describes as “controlling.” She uses the words “he wouldn't let me,” to imply that he had control and she had no choice. She tried to be more assertive, but he did not like that, so she gave in and “let” him have control. She makes the point that her husband was a “nice” man, unlike her father, who was physically and sexually abusive. It did not matter that she deferred to him, she claims, but then indicates her uncertainty and ambivalence about her acquiescence with the words “I guess.”

Louise is now helping her son and daughter-in-law raise their child. Her son has been unemployed in the past few years because of anxiety attacks. Until recently she prepared their dinner every day and took it to their house. She also cared for their child five days a week. On the advice of her doctor, Louise asked them to fix their own meals on the weekends. Her son has just begun caring for his child one day of the week, so Louise can get out of the house. She explains:

1 125 I tippy toe around the two of them
 2 125 which brings it back to *me*
 3 126 because out of my not liking arguments and not liking
 4 126 all of which I think goes back um to my upbringing
 5 127 and all of the all that went on there
 6 127 it's made me this very placating um
 7 128 let's not rock the boat
 8 128 let's kind of keep things going

9 128 proposition and so I I'm still catering to the two of them

Louise recognizes that she acquiesces or “caters” to the needs of her son and his wife. She traces her behavior to the abuse in her childhood and to her discomfort with conflict. These are the reasons she has become a “placating” person.

Perseverance

Perseverance is the ability to proceed with one's life in spite of adversity. Women said that self-determination and stubbornness helped them persevere. For example, Anne said “I've always been an *exceedingly* determined person able to set goals for myself and plod toward them, one *determined* step after another as though I could *out wait* anybody, just *keep on going*.” Alice who worked all hard of her life in spite of recurring depression, said that adversity gave her the drive to carry on. Louise explained that depression did not stop her:

1	763	I'm aware enough there's a way through it
2	763	and it's been hard
3	764	and I have had and I have been depressed a lot um
4	764	but I've still made my life <i>work</i> ,
5	765 proposition	and I've always I've never been one to sit around
	765	wringing my hands
6	765	I just (she laughs) even though I'm <i>hurting</i>

Louise uses the words “always” and “work” to emphasize her determination to carry on. Despite depression and other difficulties she has “still” persevered.

Zella has also persevered despite pain and loss in her life. Now she has decided to avoid relationships because she can no longer risk rejection or the pain of loss. She said,

“I guess there I guess you come to a time in your life when there are risks that you just don’t want to take anymore.” She continued:

1	215		It’s sort of I guess it’s sort of like this old dog
2	215		this is the last dog (p)
3	215		I can’t hurt myself anymore,
4	216	proposition	<i>I don’t want to be hurt anymore,</i>
5	216		I don’t know that I’ve built a shell around myself
6	217		but I just know what I can do
7	217		and what I can’t do
8	217		and living with another human is something I can’t do
9	218		and living with another old dog is something I don’t want
	218		to do
10	218		so I mean you know I just
11	219		and I’ve buried a lot of them and (p)
13	219		it’s a very, it hurts [um hmm] I I don’t know,
14	220		there’s no other expression to say except that <i>I just don’t</i>
	220		<i>want to hurt</i> [um hmm] <i>anymore</i>

Zella emphasizes with repetition that she does not want to be hurt again. She has endured so much pain and loss that she can not withstand any more. Protecting herself from disappointment and loss, she claims, allows her to persevere.

Although determination allowed Anne to survive, she described disadvantages to being strong-willed:

1	456		oh yeah um I’m a very strong and determined person
2	457		and I think life for me would have been a lot easier
	457		if I had been able to work more compatibly with other
	458		people to achieve common goals
3	458		but I’m really not very um
4	458		I don’t compromise very easily
5	459		I’ve learned to work more cooperatively with others since
	459		I’ve gotten older
6	460		but um I have a stiff necked independence that has
	460		probably served me well
7	460		but that has probably been at times a <i>destructive</i>
	461		influence,
8	461	proposition	life might have gone a lot easier for me if I had a happier

	461	childhood
9	462	and uh viewed people with a little less resentment
10	462	and um I might have been able to be a little more
	463	compassionate toward people who are a little weaker
	463	willed than I,
11	464	but I'm not compassionate toward weak willed people at
	464	all
12	464	I should be
13	464	but I'm not.

Anne describes herself as strong and determined. She also uses the words “stiff-necked” to suggest that she was less compassionate, less compromising than she might have been without the abuse and neglect in her childhood.

Faith also helped some women endure effects of the abuse. Anne had faith that she was not alone. She said, “I was taught to say my prayers as a little girl, and I I don't know whether I was taught that there was a god somewhere or whether I just to came to that feeling myself.... I felt alone in the sense of not being cared about by the people around me, but in another sense I really never did feel alone completely. I mean I never felt completely abandoned and adrift.” In some instances faith was part of religious expression. For example, Zella said that as an adult she has a “very deep belief in God (4). When all else fails, pray.” Alice went to Christian bible school, and said that her education there gave her strength that in bad times.

Faith also meant trust that the abuse did not define the world. Anne said

1	309	I I think the world is a wonderful beautiful place,
2	309	I believe in the essential goodness of other human beings
3	310	um I think life is a <i>wonder</i>
4	310	and I think that if anything pulled me through the bad
	311	periods of my life
	311	and the really cruel things that have happened to me
6	312	proposition is that I've always known that that goodness and beauty

312 was all around me
7 312 if I could just somehow escape present circumstances.

Anne declares her belief in human decency and beauty. This faith, which she had, even as a child, enabled her to survive the neglect and cruelty in her life. A key factor in her faith is the belief that the conditions of her childhood were circumstantial and temporary, not personal. Her faith helped her endure then until she could escape those conditions.

While endurance was the primary way that women coped with the abuse as children and the way that many women coped with the effects across their lives, some women did develop other ways of coping. These include gaining a voice, making choices, coming to terms with their past, and forgiveness.

Gaining a Voice

Gaining their voice is one of the ways that some women overcame the effects of the abuse. Gaining a voice means being able to express who they are and ask for understanding. It is a process that began when women talked about the abuse and then continued when they talked about their feelings and asked for understanding. Anne, who described her silence when assaulted by her father, said that therapy for problems traced to the abuse helped her learn to talk about her feelings. She said, just the “exercise of giving voice to your feelings helps to order your feelings and some of the quandaries are almost um some of the quandaries that you feel as a confused and hurt person are almost resolved, simply because you had to order them for another person.” Gaining a voice

often began with talking about the abuse. The life stories of Alice, Virginia and Belinda all show their efforts to gain their voices. Belinda said that the first time she tried to talk about the abuse, she could not, but sobbed instead. She kept trying, however, and eventually she was able to tell what happened to her. Talking about the abuse was also Alice's first step in gaining her voice. Virginia told her family about the abuse and now she is in the process of learning to talk to her children about her feelings and needs.

Lydia said that the consequence of not saying how she feels is resentment and tension:

1	369	Martha I still have times when I feel like um <i>oh my gosh</i>
2	370	I'm really upset about that
3	370	but I can't say anything about that,
4	370	because this isn't a good time
5	371	because Andy is really <i>discouraged today</i> about his the
	371	development of <i>his</i> business
6	372	and then when he's on a good strong day
7	372	when he's feeling really solid
8	373	that if I don't want to break to burst that bubble by telling
	373	him that that I resent this
9	374	so I still do it, I still do it [um hmm]
10	374	and I would say that if he was still in the room [um hmm]
11	375	sure but <i>oh god</i> it is such a <i>burden</i> to be um carrying
12	375	proposition and not to be able to say what I <i>really</i> want to say
13	375	so I get angry about it
14	376	so I carry that resentment grinch about it
15	376	I'm so aware that I'm doing it though now,
16	377	I mean I didn't know I was doing it until I grew up
17	377	I I find myself in a much more mellow place now
18	378	I mean I'm <i>really</i> aware of when I do what I just
	378	described to you
19	379	when I'm not doing that I'm just much more mellow

Although there are still times when she does not speak up because she is afraid of hurting someone, Lydia now recognizes the consequences. It does not matter whether her

partner is discouraged, or feeling successful, she is afraid to speak up because it will upset him. When she speaks up, Lydia says, she is more comfortable with herself, more “mellow.”

Lydia, 58, describes the process of breaking a lifelong pattern of sexual tension that she traced to the abuse and to the expectations of being a woman. She said “it was just since I’ve been with Andy and I think being able to talk with him about it– finally to be able to admit it was there and that um it was something that, you know, I wanted to pay attention to. And that he supported my paying attention to it.” She continued:

1	311		happened to me when we were about to be sexual
2	311		and I started feeling this tension
3	312		and this barrier
4	312		and the walls going up
5	313		and I could say that it was
6	313		I mean I could describe that process to Andy
7	314		and then he as well as I could recognize when it was
	314		happening [um hmm]
8	314	proposition	and we just let it be there you know
9	314		we just let it be there
10	315		and not move on from that point um
11	315		until it I I I was ready
12	316		and it was very nice you know
13	316		it was very nice
14	316		and so gradually I to um to just roll with that to know,
	316		you know, to recognize it
15	317		sometimes it would just come up for a moment
16	317		and I would recognize it and I’d go OK (laughs)
17	318		and that was what it took to you know kind of short
	318		circuit it and get past it [um hmm]
18	319		and I mean to this day I guess it happens sometimes,
19	319		but probably more often it doesn’t happen [um hmm]
	320		OK?
20	320		So that’s a pretty good pattern,
21	320		pretty good trajectory to be on,
22	321		but that’s a lifetime adult pattern that was established by
	321		the abuse

23 321 *and by the way that my family is.*

With her partner's patience and support, Lydia gained some control when they made love. First she had to recognize the tension and tell him what was happening, then they had to wait until she was ready. She rarely feels the tension now because the pattern is broken.

Both Louise and Virginia said that their husbands were unable to understand the impact of the abuse in their lives and their lack of understanding exacerbated the sexual problems that they experienced. Lydia said that her partner's patience and understanding were important factors in her efforts to cope with sexual tension. Her explanation illustrates the importance of being validated in speaking up. Susanna said that validation from a counselor helped her to cope with the self-blame and guilt that she experienced for years after incidents of date rape. In her 50's she spoke to a counselor and told her about the abuse and these incidents. She said "I realized that this was what they called rape by a friend, by somebody by somebody you know. And um I didn't know that. And um I didn't know that. I guess it I mean I think I feel like it validated me in some ways— in that you feel such a sense of *shame*, and loss of your self esteem."

Making Choices

Lydia said that talking about the tension was one factor in breaking the pattern, but she had to want to pay attention to it first, she had to choose to do something about it. Susanna also described making choices. She was divorced in her late 40's and then became involved with a man who abused her. She said "I hung around with this man for

three years and that's when I drank again. And he was an abuser and he was physically abusive. And it took everything I had to get out of there. And I'm lucky to get out of there with my *life*." She told this story about getting herself out of this relationship:

1	497	AB	But boy that was a rough one to get out.
2	497	AB	I mean it was just,
4	497	EV	so I really went through the wringer on that
5	498	EV	I mean I really went down.
6	498	OR	My trailer.
8	498	OR	Every little bit that I had went. Just went.
9	499	OR	Financially I mean just zip.
10	500	CA	What I did was get a one way ticket
11	500	CA	and took a little bag and left.
12	500	CA	Told him I was leaving.
13	501	CA	I got him back to where his family was
14	502	EV	And I thought, when I hit 54,
15	502	OR	it's kind of when I woke up.
16	503	EV	I thought my God here you are divorced around 51 and
	503		you're 54,
17	503	EV	"are you gonna do this the rest of your life?
18	504	EV	What do you want.
19	504	EV	Waiting like some spontaneous insight to fall out of the
	504		sky.
20	505	EV	And you're going to know"
21	505	EV	and it's like, Susanna, "you're going to have to do this."
22	506	CA	So I figured out a way how to get him back to where his
	506		family was,
23	506	EV	cause I didn't trust him, you know.
24	507	EV	He'd kill. No <i>doubt</i> in <i>my mind</i> .
25	507	OR	So he was with his family,
26	507	EV	and it was far better to lose the truck and the other stuff
27	508	EV	and to let him feel bad about it
28	508	EV	made me feel bad,
29	508	EV	but get the hell out of there
30	509	R	I left him there
31	509	R	and went to New York

Susanna lost everything she had in the process of getting away from this man. She describes as an awakening (lines 15-22) the realization that if she wanted anything

different in the rest of her life she would have to act. She could wait for understanding, but ultimately she had to save herself. She was afraid of this man and felt powerless to take with her what was hers, but *she* made the decision to leave, and then planned and managed her own escape.

As part of making choices women set limits for those who abused them. Belinda writes to her father, but that does not mean he can visit her when he wants to. She cuts him off when he brings up things she does not want to talk about, "I don't want to hear a thing about it," she says. Anne offered to let her father live with her, but only under the condition that he would not drink. Virginia told her father he could no longer come to her house after he acted threateningly. Louise also told her father he could no longer visit her without being invited. She told this story:

1	285	AB	I did tell him he could not visit me anymore,
2	285	EV	I just thought I've had enough
3	286	OR	he only would come to see me when he had a fight with
			my stepmother
4	287	OR	who hated me because she said I was my father's favorite
5	287	OR	um and he if he fought with her he would get on,
6	288	OR	because he worked for the railroad
7	288	OR	he could get on the train and he would
8	288	EV	and I thought I
9	289	OR	he never asked if he could come
10	289	OR	he would just appear at my door
11	289	EV	and I finally thought he's not coming to see me, or Luke
			or my child,
12	290	OR	in fact he never even acknowledged Paul,
13	291	OR	um he only comes because it's the way to get at Else,
14	291	OR	and he will come
15	291	OR	and he will cry
16	292	OR	and put me through an emotional um storm that I don't
			need
17	292	EV	and I thought I don't owe this man anything anymore
18	293	EV	I finally I thought I will help him if he needs financial

293 help
 19 293 EV I will talk to him on the phone if he wants to talk,
 20 294 EV but he just can not put himself in my life whenever he
 294 feels like it
 21 295 EV not *caring* what it is doing to me
 22 295 EV or not even being able to think about it, [um hmm]
 23 295 EV I did not have to take this pain anymore
 24 296 CA and I just said “you may not come to visit me, unless
 296 you’re invited”
 25 296 CA and “I can not”
 26 297 CA and I told him why
 27 297 CA I said “I can not emotionally take your coming here,”
 28 298 CA he didn’t really understand that but um
 29 298 OR and I had talked to the doctor that I saw at the time
 30 299 OR and he said “no, you’re right you don’t have to”
 31 299 EV because I would just a nervous wreck from that
 32 300 EV and uh and um I cried
 33 300 EV I felt really really bad
 34 300 OR but so that when my father then died,
 35 301 OR he lived to be about 96, [wow]
 36 302 OR my stepmother did not tell me that he had died, um
 37 302 OR she did not notify me or tell me
 38 302 OR it came from my niece
 39 303 OR and the whole it was even too late for me to go to his
 303 funeral,
 40 303 EV but somehow it didn’t even bother me,
 41 304 EV cause somehow I thought I had lost him at that point
 42 304 OR when I told him not to come anymore
 43 304 EV I thought that’s when he was really out of my life
 44 305 OR and um and it’s my stepmother and he must,
 45 305 OR she did take care of him
 46 306 OR and they I guess somehow they worked out their needs,
 47 306 EV but um I I was *out* of it
 48 307 EV so it wasn’t a sad time for me when he actually died,
 49 307 EV it was it was
 50 307 EV I had lost him before
 51 308 R and should have
 52 308 R and tried to come to terms with some of what went on

Louise contends her father did not come to see her or her family but used her

when he had fought with his wife. She repeats now the dialogue that she had with herself

then to justify what she needed to do. She uses the word “finally” twice, suggesting the years that she endured this relationship. She changes from past to future tense implying the hopelessness of change. This is how he was in the past, she claims, this is how he would be in the future. She quotes herself and her doctor, creating a sense of her strength and the justification for her action. She did not see her father after this confrontation but she was not sad, she says, when she learned of his death, because she had already lost him.

Although Louise communicates the pain she felt from telling her father that he could no longer drop in on her, she speaks with conviction that her request was a reasonable one. He did not care about her, she asserts, and could not think of her needs. Louise tells much of her life story with hesitations that reflect unanswered questions about the abuse, but she seldom falters as she tells this story. This story illustrates the consequences of speaking up, and Louise speaks with more confidence, fewer hesitations or questions. Although she justifies her decision, she presents all of the reasons as a silent dialogue with herself. She said to herself that she would help her father if he needed money, or talk to him if he needed to talk, but she does not claim to have said those words to him. She indicates instead that she lost contact with him then, and did not see him again. She leaves unanswered the question of what would have happened had she told her father all of the story. Would she have lost him from her life? Could he have understood more, had she told him more. She should have tried, she says, to come to

terms with him. Thus Louise tells a story of making choices and asserting herself, but this is also a story of keeping silent.

Irene, who did not feel victimized by the incident of sexual abuse that occurred when she was 8 or 9, said that she felt victimized by the role of being a wife. She explained what she had to do to overcome feeling victimized:

1	79		I think that I felt victimized <i>by</i> the status of the <i>wife</i> ,
2	79		the <i>woman</i> in the <i>household</i> ,
3	80		the running of the household, um and I think,
4	80		he died when I was right before my 40th birthday,
5	81		and it wasn't till <i>then</i>
6	81		that finally it came to me,
7	81		that nobody was <i>ever</i> in charge of me,
8	82		nobody had ever <i>been</i> in charge of me,
9	82		I made my decisions
10	82		and I think that was something that I had,
11	83		I think everybody ought to come to long before they're
	83		40,
12	83		because I think I was kind of a feel sorry for myself
	84		whiner,
13	84		and I don't think I had all that
14	84		I don't think it was anybody's fault, you know for
15	85	proposition	I think that I had to come to a point where I did realize it.
16	85		I had handled my situations,
17	85		<i>I</i> had made my decisions,
18	86		and if I got into a rocky place um
19	86		no one has perfect foresight

Irene had five children in six years, and stayed home to care for them until shortly before her husband's death when she was 39. She felt powerless in her marriage until her husband's death. Then she realized that she had made decisions and been responsible. If her husband had control, she claims that it was because she had given in to him. Like Susanna, who "woke up," Irene had to "get to a point," when she could recognize that she

did have some experience of making decisions, she had “handled” things. Then she took care of herself, she claims.

Although Irene said that she was not victimized by the incident of sexual abuse. She, like Susanna, described a process of learning to make decisions in taking care of herself. Other women also described making choices and doing things for themselves. Anne successfully raised four children and said “*I learned a skill and excelled at it and did well in my profession.*” She pointed out the connection between making opportunities for success and self esteem. She said “*So I think it’s important to make it through life thinking that you’re worthwhile person. In order to do that you have to fu... you have to make for yourself opportunities for success.*”

Overcoming the Past

Overcoming the past is a process of re-examining memories and recreating relationships. Re-examining past memories does not mean changing the memories of the abuse. Rather it means recognizing that one’s view of the past can change. For several women that means finding positive value in the experience. Irene said that she was more protective of her children when they were young because she knew what could happen to them. For example, Anne said, “*um I used to think that I was um unhappy because of the uh abuse and lack of love that I experienced. And I now think the abuse or the lack of love that I experienced as a child has given me some very special and important insights as to the special needs of children and the special qualities of women, um the ability to share my experience or to help strengthen other people.*”

Anne explained how her view of the abuse has changed:

1 341 proposition it has um my early life has given me a *gift*, uh
 2 342 I can I've come to see my I can come to see
 3 342 I have come to see the abuse showered upon me as
 343 wisdom showered on me
 4 343 because I can I *know* what hurts children,
 5 343 I know what makes children feel loved,
 6 344 I know what makes children feel unloved

Anne claims that as a result of the abuse she became more sensitive to children's needs. She uses the present tense, now she knows what hurts children, now she knows how to love them. Her family was a negative example that helped her to be a caring parent.

Susanna, who felt unloved by her mother, explained that she has re-examined her past so that it has a different meaning for her:

1 36 I mean I look back now
 2 36 and realize that for my Mom
 3 37 it must have been hard.
 4 37 And yet I look at that picture I've got,
 5 37 that's why I put that up,
 6 38 because it shows her um,
 7 38 I didn't know I was such a cute kid.
 8 38 and um it shows her doing that smocking,
 9 39 so see those loving things were *there*,
 10 39 proposition um you just need to go back and look for the more of
 39 good stuff
 11 40 That's what I've thought.
 12 40 You have go back
 40 and really *really* look for the good stuff
 13 41 instead of dwelling on the on those things
 14 41 that were part of your life experience
 15 42 that were um you perceived as um less than. (p)

Susanna offers this explanation after telling a story that illustrates maternal denial and negation. She makes the claim that if she is to have something besides the painful

memories of her mother, she has to re-examine her memories and find an example of her mother's love. Susanna keeps a picture in her room that reminds her of her mother's care, but the picture also shows that Susanna is able to reclaim something from her past besides the abuse.

Anne offered an example of another kind of reworking memories, control of painful memories. She explained

1	485	um I was describing uh kind of a visualizing exercise that
	486	I have trained myself to use
2	486	to to take these thoughts and slam them into a suitcase
3	486	and visualize setting that suitcase down
4	487	and walking away
5	487	and it has become such second nature to me that when
	488	these things come into my mind
6	488	I just slam the lid shut and don't
7	489	and say "I don't want it, no I don't want it"
8	489	it doesn't have to be
9	489	just because it was once
10	489	does not mean it has a life of it's own,
11	490	I have my own life,
	490	[you have control over your memories?]
12	490	proposition I have control over my memories
13	491	I can choose to to relive something,
14	491	I can <i>refuse</i> to live something
15	491	I can refuse to do it,
16	492	I am not going to accord abusive people in my past the
	492	permission to control my life to my <i>death</i> ,
17	493	that's a <i>stupid</i> waste of time,
18	493	so I don't,
19	493	they don't

Anne describes a visualization exercise that she employs when painful memories from her past intrude. She uses a succession of transitive active verbs, "I have" "I can" to

indicate her determination to resist the power of the past and her resolve to have a choice about how the abuse and neglect in her childhood affect her now.

Not only did women rework their memories, but they also recreated parts of their past. For example, Belinda said that the abuse robbed her of her childhood. She recreated a second childhood in her “wandering days,” and she started her life over then. Anne recreated a relationship with the father who assaulted her. She explained:

1	182		The attack on my father <i>from</i> my father weighed heavily
	182		on me for a long time
2	183		and as I grew older
3	183		I began to realize that there would be a terrible risk to
	183		myself
4	184		if I did not establish some <i>other</i> kind of relationship with
	184		my father
5	184		than the one than the only one I remembered
6	185		which was a <i>vicious</i> attack by a violent alcoholic man
7	185		and I made up mind to find my father and establish a
	186		relationship with him,
8	186		a relationship in which <i>I</i> would set the parameters for
	186		myself
9	187	proposition	I felt that in this way I could reclaim whatever my father
10	187		had stolen from me in the way of a parent-child
	188		relationship,

Anne was troubled that her relationship with her father would be defined by the memory of the assault. She decided to try to reclaim something from her father. She again uses first person subject and transitive active verbs (lines 3, 4, 7, 8, 9) to indicate her determination and resolve. Although she had not seen her father since the assault when she was 14, she discovered where he lived and visited him. She told this story:

1	209	OR	my father’s income depended, was from a very small
	210	OR	family trust and his social security,
2	210	OR	it was only a few hundred dollars a month
3	211	OR	and uh and he <i>could</i> live on that

4 211 OR and uh there were ways to live on that in that area, uh
 5 211 OR but he drank it all up, um
 6 212 OR during the time that I was down there
 7 212 OR he ran out of his social security money
 8 213 OR and he didn't have any money for booze
 9 213 OR and I wouldn't buy him any booze.
 10 214 OR I don't know much about the physiology of alcoholism
 11 214 OR and maybe that was a mistake,
 12 214 OR but he tried to wheedle money out of me
 13 215 OR and I wouldn't give it to him
 14 215 OR and he got very sick
 15 215 OR and he was sick for a couple of days,
 16 216 OR we were in our little apartment,
 18 216 OR and there was a little black and white television set in
 216 there,
 19 217 CA and um I had made some soup I thought would be good
 217 for him
 20 217 CA and we had some uh orange juice
 21 218 CA and my father was *stone* cold sober
 22 218 CA and uh we sat in front of the television set
 23 218 CA and uh had our soup
 24 219 CA and our orange juice
 25 219 CA and uh some rice and beans
 26 219 CA and we watched the Danny Kaye show on television
 27 220 EV and uh just liked 2 civilized people
 28 220 EV and (laughs) and they,
 29 221 OR it was in English they had Spanish subtitles on the screen,
 30 221 OR but the show was in English
 31 222 CA and my father *laughed*
 32 222 CA and *I* laughed
 33 222 CA and I sat there holding his hand
 34 222 EV *so grateful* with a heart absolutely *bursting* with gratitude
 223 that after *fifty* years I had an evening with a father
 35 223 EV when I felt that I loved him
 36 223 EV and wanted to care for *him*
 37 224 EV and the experience from my childhood *vanished*
 38 224 EV when I felt love and protection *for* him,
 39 225 EV realizing that I expected nothing *from* him.
 40 225 EV But *my* feelings for him totally were transformed
 41 226 R and it was the most healing thing that ever *possibly* could
 226 have happened
 42 227 CO and I will remember that evening all of my life
 43 227 CO and with *enormous* gratitude toward God or whoever

228 gave it to us,

Anne provides an extended orientation (lines 1-17) that sets the circumstances of her story. Throughout this orientation she spoke in a quiet, flat voice, restrained with the difficulty of describing her father. She tells what happened but does not disclose her feelings. Her father was, she said, an “alcoholic, pathetic person,” who could live on his income, but instead he spent all of his money on alcohol. When he ran out of money and could not get any from her, he was forced to become sober. It could have been a mistake, she admits, indicating her awareness of the extent of his alcoholism. The tone of the story and the tone of her voice changes with line 16. She became more animated, and laughed as she continued. She begins each clause with the conjunction “and,” (lines 19-33), creating a smooth flow of the subsequent events. She describes a quaint picture of a typical father and daughter enjoying an ordinary evening together. Anne fixed a nourishing meal that they ate together. They watched an old 1950’s television program together. They laughed together and she held his hand.

With this story Anne recounts the recreation of a relationship with her father. The events on the night that she describes could be a reconstructed scene from the 1950’s when he assaulted her, this time with a different ending. Although Anne achieves closure with her father, she does so with the recognition that this is not a relationship between equals. In this new relationship, she cares for him, but he is passive. She assumes the role of the parent, he is like a child. She leaves no doubt, however, about her feelings then and now. Speaking with strong emotion, shown in the italicized words “*laughed*” “*so*

grateful” “*bursting*.” she emphasizes that this night transformed her feelings for him and erased the memory of the assault. She had no expectations from him, but could accept him and care about him as he was. Anne resolves the story with her assertion that this night with her father transcends time because it has healed the past and will bring her comfort in the future.

Forgiveness

Several women mentioned forgiveness as part of their coping strategies.

Forgiveness included compassion and the ability to accept the person as they were. Anne in the previous story, accepted her father as a helpless alcoholic. She said “My father drank a lot. He was not violent. He did not try to abuse me or attack me. He was– he just made a terrible pathetic pitiful fool of himself when he drank.” Virginia extended compassion and understanding to her parents. She said that not only were her parents young when they had children, but they did not have good role models as parents. Susanna said that when the abuse by her father started, the family was in a state of considerable stress. “So here’s my Mom, my Dad, their, we’re all in a hotel and of course they don’t have money so I know it’s gotta to be real stressful.”

Forgiveness to Susanna meant recognizing the duality of her feelings towards her parents. For example, she felt rejected by her mother, but she found and put up a picture that showed that an example of her mother’s love for her. She also described loving and hating her father in this habitual narrative:

1	83	OR	And he would sit for hours
2	83	CA	and he would talk about men and women and sex
3	84	CA	and then he’d talk about dreams,

4	84	CA	he'd also talk about <i>dreams</i> about he wanted me to....
5	85	CA	what he gave was a vision to the future on education
6	85	CA	and how woman should be independent, OK?
7	86	EV	And so he did give–
8	86	R	that's the positive thing I got out of all that
9	87	R	and that he had a sense of humor
	87		[the positive thing that you got out ?]
10	87	R	got out of my relationship with him.
11	88	EV	Because see I hated him for years.
12	88	EV	I wanted to kill him.
13	88	EV	I mean I would think about how I could take a knife
14	89	EV	and (p) do something to him.
15	89	EV	I remember feeling that.

Susanna remembers that she hated her father because he sexually abused her. She also remembers that she cared for him because he gave her a vision for her future.

Forgiveness included caring for parents who at times did not care for them.

Belinda, Anne, and Susanna all care in a variety of ways for parents who did not care for them. Belinda writes to her father and tries to be kind to him. Anne maintains a relationship with her mother so that she can be available to provide care. Susanna also offered to care for her mother if she needed care. All three women offer this care because it transformed their feelings. Forgiving him helped her, Belinda emphasized. It brought her peace, but meant nothing to her father. He did not change because she forgave him.

Anne said “my relationship with my mother right now is to maintain um a relationship that will *ensure* her of my continued availability as a responsible adult in her life who who will share the rest of her life with her as she needs me.” She explained why:

1	511		<i>I have decided</i> to relate to my mother in the way that I do
	511		now
2	511		I have no expectations from my mother [um hmm] of
	512		what I expect my mother to do for me.
3	512		I have no expectations at all.

4 513 I would be surprised by nothing. Uh and I don't I mean
 5 513 I really don't care anymore.
 6 514 My function I'm almost 60 years old.
 7 514 It's not my it's not my place in life anymore to be
 514 mothered.
 8 515 proposition It's my place in life to be a responsible daughter to an
 9 515 aging woman who really will have no other resources.

Anne emphasizes strongly that she does not expect anything from her mother in return for caring for her, nor does she expect her mother to change. She is clear that she does not have to care for her mother, but rather chooses to do so. Anne has described her mother as cruel, but she defines herself as being different from her mother. Unlike her mother, Anne claims she is a responsible woman with the ability to give love. By caring for her mother she is transformed, she does not repeat her mother's actions.

Susanna's sister-in-law has urged Susanna to confront her mother about being treated unfairly. Susanna refused and explained:

1 669 And I just couldn't share with her that day
 2 669 and I mean I wanted to
 3 670 and I felt like I was milk toast,
 4 670 but a part of me knew I wasn't milk toast,
 5 670 part of me knew I was really strong,
 6 671 proposition and I chose not to talk to her. [Um hmm]
 7 671 because I thought she was a fragile woman and scared
 8 672 and that I was harming her relationship with her son
 9 672 and that he had, that she had a place with him
 10 673 and she didn't want that broken.
 11 673 And I thought you know Man, just let her have it.

Susanna chose not to confront her mother because of her mother's fragility, not because she was afraid of her. It was a decision based on strength, she claims, not weakness.

Susanna went on to explain that she would care for her mother:

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | 675 | you know if she were sick and needed my help, |
| 2 | 675 | I would go and help her, |
| 3 | 676 | I don't care. |
| 4 | 676 | I don't care that my sister-in-law would say that I'm |
| | 676 | letting, you know |
| 5 | 677 | being a door mat. |
| 6 | 677 | If I chose to do it, it's OK. |
| 7 | 677 | proposition Because you see I would be the one receiving. |

Although her mother has not helped her for years, Susanna explains that she would care for her mother if she were sick. She defines her offer as a strength, not weakness. She would be transformed by helping, i.e., she would receive more than she would give to her mother.

Resiliency

All of the women in this study initially endured the abuse, and several still endure the effects of it. Others are struggling now to find other more effective ways to cope with it. Only a few of the women have resolved the effects of the abuse. Despite that, the women in the study have exhibited resourcefulness and made tremendous accomplishments despite the abuse and/or the limited opportunity that they experienced in their childhood and adult lives. Like Alice, Belinda, and Virginia, other women can be characterized as resilient. With some exceptions, most of the women in the study have functioned well in their adult life. All of them attempted to find better opportunities for themselves or their children. Anne worked hard and struggled to raise her four children by herself. She said, "*I worked hard I learned a skill and excelled at it.*" Lydia has been a successful social worker for many years. Jean returned to college in her later 40's and

said, "I think going back to school was probably the best thing I ever did. [Because?]
Well because it made me somebody, not everybody did that you know?" Later she got a
job at a university and said, "I worked over there and worked I don't know, 16 or 17 years
something like that and I loved it." Zella also worked despite many difficulties, including
disruptive relationships and years of alcoholism. She now enjoys a comfortable pension
as a result of her ability to continue to work despite her problems.

Several women used survival skills in their adult life that they developed in
childhood as a response to the abuse. Louise learned to ignore her own discomfort as a
child. She described being able to function and care for her husband and son despite
recurrent depression. Zella said that the faith she developed as a child helped her through
times in her life when she was suicidal. Her stubbornness helped her overcome
alcoholism and other drug addictions. Anne left home when she was 18 and described
herself at that time: "I was um I think quite suicidal when I first left my mother's home
and went to live in Boston on my own. I was desperate to get away from that household,
but I didn't have a clue as to how to care for myself. I had no concept of self-worth or
what I needed to be healthy or happy and I was a very lost frightened hurt young woman
and um thought of suicide frequently." She said that the stubbornness and determination
that she developed as a child helped her through these and other difficult times. Despite
her description of her life when she was leaving home, she later managed to successfully
raise four children and eventually co-construct a fulfilling third marriage.

Most of the women in the study transformed relationships into more positive ways of relating. Several now have happy marriages with caring, considerate husbands. For example, Anne, who was severely beaten numerous times by her first husband, described her third husband in this way: “he understands me and he accepts me and he makes me laugh and he is very affectionate and he cares about me deeply and he is considerate of me and I try to be all of those things for him. I know that I can make him laugh and *he* feels loved.” All of the women who had children described their relationships with them as loving and nurturing. Despite the studies that indicate that incest survivors may experience parenting difficulties (Cole, et al., 1992; Reis & Heppner, 1993) the women in this study described their relationships with their children as healthy and caring. Anne, said, “I have four my four kids uh three of them live nearby, well within a couple of hours, one of them lives quite some distance 1500 miles away, um they all have kids, I have a good relationship with all of them” Jean described a special relationship with her oldest daughter. She said “She and I are kind soul mates sort of.” Angela, who experienced unbelievable lack of validation from either of her parents, said, “I became a mother who *allowed* her kids to blossom, like my mother would not allow me. And the fact that my three children are in tenured academic jobs and will *never* know poverty, will never know what it’s like to be on the underbelly of society, the fact that they’re *doing something* that they like molecular biologist, chemist, artist, um is an enormous achievement.”

Many women have tried to make their experience into something of meaning for others as they have struggled to find meaning for themselves. Several volunteered for this to help other women who have been abused. As Zella said “I think I’ve only told you what I’ve told you because it might be of value to someone, sometime, somewhere.” Louise also wanted to tell her story because it might help me and other women. Although she thought that her son would not approve of her participation in the study, she volunteered anyway and said: “I thought maybe on this it will help you or help somebody else that yes, um we pick up pieces and if we can just be a little aware.” Angela, who saw an announcement for my study wanted to help me as well as other women. “I believe in talking, talking and telling my story *now* too,” she said, “because and I’m glad you’re doing this, because other women my age do not *know* that’s what happening to them is maybe is if not the norm at least not abnormal, I thought I was *abnormal, my whole life.*”

While all of the women have developed the ability to care for others, some of them have also found time to develop the ability to care for themselves. Caring for themselves means developing their skills and talents. Anne said, “I sew a lot. I have uh I have almost an infatuation with the tactile feeling of fabric and it’s ah it’s a transporting joy to me to sew, I I I love the way things feel, I love arranging shapes and colors, um it’s a it’s almost a sensual experience to me to to sew and embroider and bead and um just cut things up and arrange them into new things. I just absolutely love to do that.” Several other women also have found creative endeavors to be very satisfying. A poem that Angela wrote was reprinted on a public bus and she was then invited to read her work

with other poets. Lydia said: "I'd love to be able to produce uh art, make art that that will sustain me."

Summary

The primary way of coping with the sexual abuse that they experienced as children was endurance. Several women, however, described other strategies for coping with the effects that they traced to the abuse. Anne mentioned a technique for controlling intrusive memories, Virginia and Louise both broke off relations with fathers who had abused them, after trying to explain to them why they could not come to their houses unannounced. Of all the women to experience sexual problems, only Lydia worked with her partner to gain some control and overcome the tension that she traced to the abuse. to leave them alone.

Most of the ways of coping that women have used are not problem focused strategies aimed at the effects of the abuse such as self-blame or low self-esteem. Instead many of the strategies such as forgiveness, gaining a voice, and making choices, are aimed at the causal conditions such as gender roles that preceded the abuse. For example, Virginia was not able to successfully disclose the abuse by her uncles to either of her parents. Neither was she able to tell her mother about the abuse by her father because her mother did not validate or respect her needs for confidence. She lost her voice not only because the experience of sexual abuse was discounted, but because being discounted was a pervasive condition in her childhood. Virginia is struggling now to gain her voice, and that struggle has meant talking about the abuse and how it affects her. But she is also

learning to say how she feels and what she thinks beyond the effects of the abuse. Irene claimed that she did not feel victimized by the abuse, but she felt victimized by the role of wife. Many of these women then have had dual struggles in their lives. They have had the experience of sexual abuse to cope with, but they have also had to overcome societal expectations for women of their generation.

Although endurance has allowed them to survive situations that they could not change, as a long term strategy it has not been very effective for problems like depression, sexual problems, self-blame, or shame. Louise and Angela who have endured the effects of the abuse all of their lives wonder now in their late 60's what it has meant, and they ask themselves throughout their life stories, "is this why I am the way that I am?" Women like Alice, Louise, and Zella who persevered through depression and other consequences of the abuse, have benefited from their ability to work and carry on in spite of problems. All three women are financially comfortable and trace their comfort to their ability persevere through difficult times. Although Anne pointed out with pride the comfort she experiences as a consequence of working hard, she also said that the determination that allowed her to survive can result in a less compassionate attitude. Zella said that although her decision to protect herself from risk has allowed her to persevere without being hurt again, she is lonely now. Endurance allowed survival, and even accomplishment, but it was not a strategy that allowed women to cope effectively with the effects of the abuse.

Other coping strategies allowed women to resolve the negative effects of the abuse and limiting societal expectations. Gaining their voice allowed women to say who

they are and to ask for what they need. Lydia was able to resolve sexual tension because she talked to her partner about it. Making choices gave women control in their lives. Susanna got herself out of a destructive relationship. Louise confronted her father and told him he could not continue to visit her uninvited. Making choices and acting on these choices has given women something to be proud of and provided a basis for positive self-esteem. Three women have developed ways to overcome their past. Belinda recreated a “second” life. Anne talked about using a visualization exercise to gain control over painful memories. Susanna described looking for positive indications of her mother’s love so that she is left with something besides memories of neglect and lack of love. Several women forgave their parents for sexual abuse or neglect. Forgiveness was not for the benefit of the parent, and did not change them. Forgiveness transformed the women’s feelings, and distinguished them as different from the parent who neglected or abused them.

Although many women endured the effects of the abuse, they have shown remarkable resourcefulness and resiliency. Not one has repeated the abuse. All have found ways to love and care for others in their lives.

Chapter 9 Discussion

Specific Aims

The specific aims of this study were to answer three basic questions about the experience of older women sexually abused as children.

1. From the perspective of older women themselves, has the experience of child sexual abuse affected their lives, and if so how?
2. Do developmental tasks of aging interact with the effects of child sexual abuse for women?
3. Have older women developed coping strategies for the effects of the abuse; and if so, what are they? Have these strategies changed over their lifetime?

The Effects of the Abuse

The results of this study would indicate that the answer to the first question is a resounding yes. Women in this study, who ranged in age from 57 to 75, reported negative effects from the abuse. Their definitions of sexual abuse included verbal gestures that called attention to their bodies and that made them uncomfortable. They also described sexual contact that ranged from sexual touches to intercourse. Some sexual incidents happened once while others lasted for years. With two exceptions, all of the women were abused by men in their family. One woman was abused by a friend of the family as well as by her uncle, the other was abused by her girlfriend's father.

Within the three life stories Alice, Virginia, and Belinda all described negative effects of the abuse that spanned their life course. Alice attributed recurring depression,

fear, and apprehension to the incidents of sexual abuse in her childhood. She developed a pattern of acquiescence to men that began in her childhood when she acquiesced to the men who abused her. She then repeated this pattern of acquiescence as an adult with her husband.

Virginia blamed herself for the sexual attention and gestures of her uncles and father, and internalized that blame as self dislike. Her attempts to disclose the abuse were met with disbelief or disrespect. Indeed, not being understood or respected as a child is a theme that she repeats throughout the narratives and explanations of her childhood. Without validation for who she was, Virginia lost her “voice,” the ability to communicate who she is, how she feels, and what she thinks. Virginia’s husband was unable to listen to or understand her, and she then repeated a life theme of not having someone to talk, not being heard or understood. She said the abuse continues to bother her and “comes up” whenever she is depressed or feeling bad.

Belinda said that the abuse stunted her in every way, personally and interpersonally. She connected sexual dysfunction and a myriad of problems with self esteem to the abuse. She continues to struggle with internalized self blame, feeling that people will recognize that she has been sexually abused and blame her for it. Belinda’s first marriage repeated in a different form the abuse of her childhood and she withdrew into silence, losing her voice.

Across life stories women traced multiple effects to the abuse: negative feelings about the self, feelings of blame and guilt, questions of identity, and numerous sexual

problems, including fear of sexual relations, problems in sexual response, and unwanted sex. Many women described guilt and shame about the abuse and blamed themselves for it. Several attributed lost opportunities to the abuse including normal childhood experiences and income that was lost because coping with the abuse interfered with their ability to work and provide for themselves.

Causal conditions that either enabled or facilitated the abuse included family characteristics and socially defined gender roles. Silence in the family, power differentials between children and adults, paternal absence and lack of maternal support facilitated the abuse or allowed it to continue. These factors were defined as part of the child's normal family life. For example, silence was not a conspiracy of ill-intentioned perpetrators, but was described as a normative family experience. Angela said that the silence in her family was not punishment nor did her parents mean to be cruel, "it's not that they were *mean*," she said, "it was that it was their way."

Gender roles facilitated the abuse or caused similar effects. Gender roles privileged brothers, limited expectations for girls, and/or emphasized girls' appearances rather than their accomplishments or intellect. The consequences were decreased self-esteem and confidence. Specifically, two women said their brothers were treated with greater respect and given more affection, and this differential treatment created feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt that allowed the abuse to occur. For some women, the effects of the abuse and gender roles overlap and the effect was additive. One woman said that as a child she recognized that the differences in sex role expectations were unfair and

restrictive for her, but the assault by her father extended that unfairness into a new role: victimization. Another said the abuse confirmed the sense of inadequacy she felt because she was a girl. Other women who did not feel victimized by the abuse in childhood did describe feeling victimized by the role of wife, or did feel limited by the social expectations for women when they were growing up.

Comparisons with Younger Women

The long term consequences of the abuse for the older women in this study parallel the experience of younger women. These women traced similar effects to the abuse as have younger women. Research with children and younger adult survivors indicates that some family characteristics are associated with child sexual abuse (Alexander & Lupfer, 1987; Ray et al., 1991; Harter, et al., 1988; Edwards & Alexander, 1992). Specifically, family cohesion and adaptability, social isolation within the family, parental conflict, and paternal dominance have all been found in families in which abuse occurs. It is not clear, however, whether these factors are cause or consequence of the abuse.

Women in this study described fathers who perpetrated abuse or fathers who were emotionally absent. For example, Lydia who said that she adored her father, also said, “the *distance* between us was so great that um you know. It’s not surprising I just wouldn’t go to him for help with something if I needed it. Because he it’s like that wasn’t his role you know.” While family cohesion and adaptability are risk factors for abuse, and may also predict children’s poor adjustment (Ray et al., 1991; Harter, et al., 1988), the

literature on child sexual abuse has not focused on fathers who are emotionally disconnected from their families.

Peters (1988) found that lack of maternal warmth was the strongest predictor of the risk of sexual abuse for children. The experience of women in this study confirms this. The lack of maternal affirmation promoted a lack of self esteem and self dislike that the abuse confirmed. The experience of sexual abuse by her cousin taught Lydia that what she felt and said were not important. She said her mother's lack of acceptance, coupled with the abuse, created life long problems. Zella said she felt she was never good enough for her grandmother, and the abuse confirmed those feelings of inadequacy. The support Irene received from her mother negated the effects of the abuse, illustrating the positive impact of maternal warmth and affirmation. Experts in child sexual abuse have pointed out that children's risk factors for sexual abuse include feeling emotionally deprived, socially isolated, and/or feeling powerless and helpless (Russell, 1986; Finkelhor, 1981). At most then, lack of maternal support may have increased the risk of sexual abuse for the women in this study. At least, it compounded the effects of the abuse by affecting the child's self esteem.

The family silence and lack of a trusted adult that some women in this study described may indeed be similar to social isolation that is commonly found in families in which children have been abused. Some women did describe their families as chaotic and under high stress. For example, three women said their fathers were alcoholic and fought frequently with their mothers. Others described the stress of unemployment and poor

living conditions. Most of the women in this study, however, did not describe their families as rigid or inflexible. Several described families that were financially secure and three said that they had at least one parent who was emotionally supportive and stable. Although these women described their families as normal, not dysfunctional, they still identified lack of affirmation from their mothers and not being emotionally connected to their fathers as factors that contributed to the effects of the abuse.

There is some question in the literature as to whether family characteristics are a cause or consequence of the abuse. That is, the experiences of the abuse and the subsequent reporting of the abuse to the authorities may plunge families into very stressful situations, particularly incestuous families. They may undergo considerable strain as they attempt to deal with the abuse, experiencing greater malfunctions. That is not the case for any of the women in this study. The family characteristics that these women described were not a consequence of the abuse, but rather in many instances facilitated the abuse.

Developmental Aspects of Child Sexual Abuse

Results from this study indicate that the answer to the second question, does the abuse interfere with developmental tasks of aging, is also yes. Child sexual abuse had the potential to resonate across their lives. The results from this study extend the knowledge of the long term effects of child sexual abuse through time. These older women traced to the abuse the same kinds of negative psychological and interpersonal problems that younger women have described. For many of these women, however, the abuse interfered

with the developmental tasks of aging. Women, 60 years later, said that they are still reminded of the sexual touches they experienced in childhood, and that it still bothers them. They continue to think about the abuse and blame themselves for it. As the abuse reverberated through these women's lives it compounded age related tasks. For example, widowhood has been more complicated for Alice, Virginia, and Louise because of unresolved questions about the abuse. Coping with the abuse has affected their ability to work and made retirement or retirement planning more difficult for Belinda, Angela, and Susanna. Although Jean has a happy marriage, the abuse still interferes with and disrupts the kind of sexual affection that she and her husband might have enjoyed in their later years. Thus, for many of these women the effects of the abuse were not limited to their younger years, but continues to affect them as they age.

Coping with the Abuse

The answer to the third question, did women cope with the effects of the abuse, is a more tentative yes. Although each woman responded to the abuse, not all of them resolved the effects of it, and instead endured the effects throughout their lives. Several women have attempted or are now attempting to resolve the abuse and the effects of it. Gender roles paralleled and overlapped the abuse laying a groundwork of insecurity, low self-esteem, or injustice. Women's coping efforts were a response to these two factors, that is, some were directed at the abuse, some at the experience of growing up female.

Within the individual lives, Alice coped by enduring the abuse. She repeated with her second husband a pattern of acquiescence that began in her childhood in response to

the abuse. She was silent about the abuse and the effects of it until her early 60's when she sought help for the depression that she traced to the abuse. Alice persevered much of her life despite the unresolved effects of the abuse. She struggled to make a living, and ignored the abuse by just "gritting her teeth." Her first step in resolving the effect of the abuse was to seek help for the depression and disclose the abuse to the counselor.

Virginia is in the midst of attempting to cope with the effects of the abuse. She initially endured the abuse in silence. Disclosing the abuse was her first step in resolving the effects of it. Virginia continues to cope with regaining her voice, learning to say who she is and what she thinks.

Belinda has coped extensively with the effects of the childhood sexual abuse and the abuse by her first husband. She used a variety of problem solving strategies, such as affirmations, 12 Step Programs, counseling, and survivor groups. She defines her spiritual journey as the critical turning point in her efforts to cope with the effects of the abuse. Indeed, this journey is the beginning of the "second" life, a life in which she regains her voice, forgives her father, and achieves peace.

Looking across cases, many of the women in the study endured both the abuse and the effects of it throughout their lives. Silence is part of endurance and many women are still silent about the abuse. Some women extended the silence about the abuse to larger patterns of silence, that is, to not being able to say who they were. For many women in this study, the silence that is part of endurance has led to a loss of voice.

Acquiescence was part of many women's initial response to the abuse, and it was also part of the pattern of endurance. Compliance to husbands was a common theme, and without exception women described their first husbands as having greater control in decision making, finances, and aspects of every day life such as driving the car. One woman who described herself as "compliant" to her husband describes being acquiescent since his death to the needs of her son and daughter-in-law.

Endurance allowed women to survive the abuse until they could access the resources they needed to cope with the effects of the abuse. Endurance did not allow them to cope with or resolve effects such as recurring depression, sexual problems, self-blame, or shame. Women who have not resolved the effects of the abuse still ask themselves what it means in their life.

Several women developed other strategies for coping with the effects of the abuse. Meaning is a constructed process that occurs over time, and some women's perceptions of the meaning of the abuse changed as they grew older. For example, some women found positive lessons from the abuse. Several women found ways to re-examine their pasts in order to keep from being revictimized in their adult lives by their painful and difficult childhood. Some women forgave the parents who had either neglected or abused them. Women who forgave their parents were able to claim that they were different from those parents who misused or abused them. Forgiveness also brought peace from the troubling memories of the abuse.

Other strategies that women used to cope with the effects of the abuse include gaining a voice, that is, learning to express themselves and ask for understanding. This step began with disclosing the abuse. Gaining a voice implied, but was not limited to, talking about the abuse. Learning to say who they are gave women a chance to become themselves, rather than being hidden behind compliance and trying to please. Learning to speak successfully also implies being heard. That is, it implies a partner, husband, or friend who will listen with respect and validate what they hear. Gaining a voice has two outcomes, it allowed women to negotiate control over events and relationships and to have the chance to receive validation from others.

Women also learned to make choices as they coped with the long-term effects of the abuse. They described the realization that they had to begin to take care of themselves if they were to experience change. They could not wait for insight or for someone to rescue them. Some of their choices consisted of setting limits on the access that their abusive parents had in their lives, leaving a destructive relationship, or creating new opportunities for themselves.

Comparisons with Younger Women

Women in this study described the ways that they endured or coped with the effects of the abuse. Beyond that, they exhibited resourcefulness and resiliency. Some of the ways that they have coped with the abuse are similar to the experience of younger survivors coping with the effects of the abuse. However, many of their strategies, like endurance, are more global response patterns. Women did not mention things like wishful

thinking and daydreaming, that younger women mention. Instead they talked about compliance and silence. Endurance has, however, the same effect as emotion focused strategies, that is, it allows the women to manage negative emotions such as depression and shame that have extended across their lives. Like emotion focused strategies, endurance was associated with more negative outcomes because it did not include ways to change their situations or perceptions.

Like younger survivors, few of the women in this study told anyone about the abuse. Studies indicate that disclosing sexual abuse may be risky for children, and may result in negative consequences (Roesler, 1994; Roesler & Wind, 1994). However, talking about the abuse is a first step in resolving the effects of it for survivors (Herman & Schatzow, 1987; Gelanis, 1983; Poston & Lison, 1989). Women in this study who have not coped with the effects of the abuse still do not talk about it. Others disclosed the abuse as they gained their voices.

Some of the women in this study have blamed themselves for the abuse for much of their lives. As with younger survivors, self-blame is associated with more negative outcomes. Some women, like Belinda, Virginia, and Angela, internalized the blame. Blame in this sense is an expression of feeling “wrong.” It is who they are, not what they have done that they feel is wrong. It is different from low self-esteem because it is not based on competency. Studies indicate that this characterological self-blame is more common among survivors of sexual abuse and is highly correlated with negative outcomes such as depression (Hoagwood 1992; Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Only a few women mentioned using problem focused techniques that younger survivors have used (Salter, 1995; Maltz, 1991). For example, Anne used a visualization technique to control intrusive memories. Lydia coped with the sexual tension with the help of her partner in a process of recognizing the tension and then waiting until it subsided.

Several women in this study struggled to make meaning from the abuse. Some, like younger women, found positive benefits from the experience (Clarke, 1993; Silver, et al., 1983). Although confrontation is a more common theme for younger survivors (Cameron, 1994; Sanderson, 1995; Druacker, 1992), women in this study attempted to overcome their past and forgive their abusers.

Theoretical Perspective

There is a gap between the coping strategies for child sexual abuse, which is based on the experience of younger women, and those strategies that were outlined by the women in this study. Except for Virginia, who was seeing a counselor at time of the interview, the women in this study who sought therapy for the abuse did so years ago. The coping strategies that they described are not focused on the specific effects of the abuse such as depression, shame, or sexual problems, but represent more global responses. The theories that have been proposed to explain the effects of the abuse, such as PTSD, and Traumagenic Dynamics, are referenced to the more specific effects of the abuse. None of the theories proposed to explain the variation in the effects of child sexual abuse match these strategies outlined by the women in this study. For example, neither

PTSD nor psychological adaptation to trauma explain loss of voice, acquiescence, and the corresponding coping strategies, gaining a voice and making choices. Even those who propose a developmental framework to explain the variation in the severity of the effects of the abuse focus on the developmental stages in which the abuse occurs. No one has considered a life course approach to explain the effects of child sexual abuse. One theory that speaks to women's development, however, does explain some of these and other effects and the strategies that women have used to cope with and resolve the abuse. This is self-in-relation theory of women's development.

Existing theories of adult development generally assume some type of separation or autonomy as a stage that is necessary for actualization or identity formation. For example, Erikson's theory of human development suggests autonomy and initiative as primary tasks for childhood and adolescence (Carlsen, 1988). An alternative theory, proposed by psychologists working at the Stone Center at Wellesley College assume instead that women's development takes place within relationship, i.e., self-in-relation (Miller, 1984; Kaplan, 1986). Rather than viewing development in childhood and adolescence as a process of gaining autonomous identity through increasing disconnection, self-in-relation theory proposes that identity comes through connection. Two key aspects of this theory are that women develop a capacity to be attuned to the emotions of others and that understanding and being understood by the other are of primary concern to women. Indeed, the basis of all psychological growth, Miller (1991) proposes, is the ability which begins in infancy to attend to and respond to the other.

Self-in-relation theory uses a developmental perspective. Miller begins with infancy and suggests that not only is connection the first experience of the infant, but as infants relate to their initial caregiver they develop an internal representation of themselves as a “being-in-relationship.” The very first sense of self does not occur as a process of separation from the caregiver, rather the first experience of self is an experience of connection. According to Miller, the infant responds to the feelings of the caretaker and experiences a sense of comfort only when the other is also comfortable, that is, both are engaged in a relationship that is moving toward greater well-being. The core self forms as it is attended to by others and as it attends to the emotions of the other. This emotional interaction is the basis for the development of the adult self that attends to and responds to the emotions of others in relationship. This is the basis for the development of empathy (Surrey, 1991).

Miller defines childhood not in terms of developing separation and autonomy, but rather as a time of developing choice of how to do and be within the context of relationship— “agency-in-community.” Often it means responding to the mother and attending to her emotions. The tasks that are required at this stage are for the girl to develop a sense of her own capacities and to put herself, her feelings and thoughts into “effect.” According to Miller, these tasks are possible only because the child is in a relationship. Again, development is not a process of separating, but rather a process of experiencing a fuller sense of self in more complex relationships to other selves.

Social values towards men and women are important factors in the child and adolescent development. Miller recognizes that boys and girls are also the product of societal influences that predispose them to develop different characteristics. In western, white societies mothers are encouraged to believe in and uphold the importance and power of men. A girl consequently may learn to devalue women and at the same time learn to place a greater importance on men. Girls may also learn in childhood to focus all their energies on the well-being, growth, and development of men. Although her relationship to women continues, a pronounced turning away from the mother toward the father may occur. Girls are also taught to emphasize their emotional abilities, while boys are diverted from developing theirs because emotional, relational skills are neither valued nor encouraged for boys. Instead boys are both encouraged to develop themselves “outside” of relationships and discouraged from developing their sense of self-in-representation. They are rarely encouraged to develop a primary responsibility for others or the desire to concentrate on the relationship between themselves and others. Boys may also learn to expect girls to adapt to them. In these ways, development for girls and boys may be complicated because the necessary tasks may not be valued or promoted by societal rules.

Adolescence is described by Miller (1991) as a time of more intense pressure and serious conflict, but it is also a time of increased cognitive capacities and the ability to act. For girls adolescence may be a time of contraction, not increased development. Girls frequently learn in adolescence that their sexual impulses, perceptions, sensations are not

supposed to arise from themselves for themselves, but are to be evoked for and by men. Girls may learn that their perceptions about their bodies and their sexual feelings are not acceptable, and instead may come to feel that they are shameful and wrong. They may then learn to experience their sexual feelings in a negative way. Although a young girl may try to act on her desires within her relationships, she may not meet with acceptance and respect because of the differential social expectations and pressures on boys. If a girl does not receive acceptance and validation in the relationship, her choice is “doing for others.” Breaking off or being outside relationships is not a choice, because growth occurs in relationships. The consequence of doing for others, however, is that the young girl’s sense of herself is left out of the relationship. At this stage, a girl learns to operate within relationships, but because of societal influences and devaluation of women and relatedness, she has also learned that she is not able to use all of her powers. Thus her sense of herself as an active agent may be altered to some degree by a sense of a self who must defer to others’ needs or desires.

Girl’s first sexual experiences in adolescence may bring together two opposing parts of the self. The first is the part that wants and needs to be attuned to others, the second is the part that has learned that sexuality is unacceptable. In the face of this conflict, a girl may leave a larger part of herself out of the relationship. Thus at adolescence the girl is unsuccessfully seeking to fulfill two complex needs: to be herself with all of her capacities, and to do so within the context of relationship. Miller defines this conflict as “a need to be-in relationship,” that is, to be connected versus “a need to

be-within-relationship,” that is, being oneself in the relationship. Many adolescent girls may be unable to bring either their ability to be themselves or their sexuality into their developing relationships with boys.

In later life, a woman’s sense of self is enhanced as she feels connection to another. Being in-relationship, sensing what the other feels, and attending to the emotional interaction in relationships becomes an accepted, natural way of being. It is a goal or motivation, not a detraction. However, attending to the needs of others and to the relationships between people is not seen as a requirement for well-being in western, white society. Rather it is relegated to the world of mothers and infancy, and valued in this context, but not in others.

Being in relationship implies mutuality, it implies that both people in a relationship have relational responsibility. Both partners must put attention and energy into caring for the relationship (Surrey, 1991). Mutual empathy occurs when two people relate to each other in the context of interest in the other. Both then are emotionally available and responsive to each other, and have both cognitive appreciation of the wholeness of the other and acknowledgment of the sameness. It means that one not only listens, sees, understands, and is emotionally available, but also that one is heard, seen, understood, and known. Mutual relationships are seen as crucial to most people’s psychological well-being (Surrey, 1991). Imbalance occurs when one person does most of the accommodating and giving. The inevitable consequences of self-sacrificing are a devaluing of the self and resentment of the other, who comes to be seen as more powerful

and more worthy. Imbalance in mutuality may lead to withdrawal, feelings of helplessness, and a regressive wish for nurturance and care from others.

Mutual relationships are dependent on the ability to hear and be heard, to speak and to listen. Speaking one's feelings and thoughts is part of being, understanding, creating, and recreating one's self (Jack, 1991). The wider the gap between outward presentation of self and inward experience, the more likely that a woman will feel anguish and despair over her inauthenticity and her self-betrayal. Voice is an indicator of self. Jack (1991) distinguishes two consequences for women of the loss of voice in relationship. First, by removing herself from the dialogue, her interpersonal needs for intimacy, love, and acceptance become impossible. Second, if women try to fit into someone else's image, partner, societal, parental, they lose themselves. "If the self of intimate interaction is contrived—that is, constructed to accord with someone else's image—the possibility of attaining authentic relationship diminishes, while the probability of losing one's voice and self in the quest for intimacy increases" (Jack, 1991, pp. 32-33).

To be willing to explore who one is with another implies belief in the legitimacy of who one is. Western, white culture has valued competition and individuality at the expense of connection and intimacy (Miller, 1986). Women's difficulties in maintaining their voice in intimate relationships reflects their social position as well as their individual psychology. Jack has written about the implications of self-in-relation theory for women who are depressed. Rather than looking at depression as a consequence of women's internal locus of control, or learned helplessness, she proposes that it is a consequence of

cultural values that on the one hand encourage relational development for women but that also devalue those relational qualities.

Self-in-Relation Theory and Child Sexual Abuse

Self-in-relation theory helps explain the patterns of coping that the older women in this study used to cope with the abuse. For example, endurance that was so frequently used as a way to respond to the abuse, may be seen as a way of preserving primary relationships. The lack of resistance to the abuser, particularly when he was part of the family, becomes much more understandable in the context of this theory because to resist the abuse is to risk breaking up primary relationships. From the perspective of self-in-relation theory that is an almost unendurable task because development is possibly only in relationship. Acquiescence then becomes a means of protecting the self, not just a reflection of the power differential between children and adults.

Silence was a consequence of being unable to talk about the abuse as children. It is also a consequence of the lack of trusted persons in their lives and the lack of validation in their childhood. If the core self forms in relation to caregivers who are absent or unable to affirm the child, or who abuse the child, then development of the core self may be disrupted. As Jack (1991) points out, voice is an indicator of self, and these women's lack of voice reflects the impact of the abuse on the formation of self.

Adolescence for most women in this study was a time when they were not only discounted, but were physically violated. If "normal" development for girls entails not being able to use their powers, and developing a sense of self who must defer to the needs

of others, then sexual abuse has the potential to compound this loss of self. If girls experience their sexual feelings in negative ways during normal adolescent development, how much more difficult this must have been for these women whose caregivers used them for their own pleasure, discounting the girls' feelings and very identity in the process. During adolescence, learned patterns of acquiescence and silence had the potential to be extended from the abuse into other relationships.

For many women in this study, endurance was a pattern of coping that extended into their adult lives. Silence that began with not being able to talk about the abuse extended to not being able to talk about their sexual responses and needs, not being able to say who they were, and feeling too ashamed to ask for recognition. One of the consequences of silence is that these women became hidden and invisible to others. If many women struggle with gaining their voice, as self-in-relation theory proposes, some of the women in this study had an even more difficult time because the abuse interfered with or destroyed the connection, trust, and validation in relationship that is necessary to develop one's self. The lack of voice in their narratives speaks strongly to this lack of self-development.

Mutuality in primary relationships was achieved by only a few of these women, and then only after years of coping with the effects of the abuse and gaining their voice. Rather than mutuality, most women characterized their role in their primary relationships as acquiescent. Without the ability to speak, without being able to say who they are, but with the need to maintain their relationships, they gave up control to husbands and in one

case, to their children. Imbalance in relationships comes about when one person does all of the accommodating and giving. As Surrey (1991) points out, imbalance in mutuality leads to withdrawal or resentment. Thus several women characterized their marriages as unhappy because their husbands were controlling and unable to share their feelings.

To conclude that these women were silent, acquiesced, and therefore did not achieve mutuality may be accurate. However, it misses the fact that their husbands, with a few exceptions, repeatedly were not only unable to hear, but they too were silent. Even when these women spoke up and tried to explain what the abuse meant, what they needed sexually, few of the husbands were able to hear and to understand. Mutuality implies two people with voice, each of whom is able to listen and to speak. If girls are encouraged to emphasize their emotional abilities, boys are frequently discouraged from developing theirs. In this way, societal factors did not promote the ability of women and their partners or husbands to function well in balanced, mutual relationships.

Self-in-Relation Theory and the Impact of Gender Roles

Self-in-relation theory also explains the impact of gender roles. The women in this study grew up in a time when these differential expectations and values for men and women were even more exaggerated than they are today. Both men and women were taught to “keep a stiff upper lip” and not “air dirty laundry,” that is, they were not supposed to express their feelings or talk about problems. During the time that the women in this study grew up, societal expectations were that they would acquiesce to their husbands. Wives typically had less power in their marriage than their husbands

(Goodrich, 1991). It was not until the late 1960's that women's social roles began to be publicly debated. If many of the women in this study endured the abuse for much of their life, social conditioning and developmental factors help to explain that pattern.

Newburger and Devos (1988) point out the importance of recognizing the child's beliefs about control and personal efficacy because negative consequences of child sexual abuse are mediated by a child's belief that she can exert some power or control. Power for women of these generations, however, was more limited and their choices were more constrained than they are today.

These "cohort" differences also explain the losses that women traced to being raised as girls. Although girls may still not be encouraged to study math and science, that lack of encouragement is at least part of the public dialogue. When these women were young, societal expectations were even more limiting. Several women mentioned an interest in and talent for science that was either discouraged or ignored. Anne said when she was a child, "somebody would comment on my *clothing* or my *hair* instead of some *wonderful* thing I had discovered and wanted to share with someone. Where as if I had been a *boy* and I had brought in a snake and said look at all of the beautiful stripes somebody would 'oh isn't that wonderful, he's going to grow up to be a scientist.'"

Women felt in their adult lives the same societal limitations because of gender expectations. Although those who had children expressed satisfaction and pride with their role as mothers, several who either did not work outside the home or who did not begin to work until late in their life, also spoke of the loss of their intellectual identity. Several

women said “I could have been,” or “I could have done” more with their lives, had they had some encouragement or recognition. Instead, as was common for many women of their generation, that part of them was often invisible.

Several women described ways of coping that were more in response to gender issues. Thus gaining their voice, making choices, and overcoming the past are a response to both the condition of being raised female and to the experience of sexual abuse. The women in this study, perhaps more than younger survivors, searched for ways to preserve their relationships, even to the point of recreating them, as they attempted to overcome their past. Although younger women in one study tried to avoid providing care for parents who had abused them (Joseph & Rose, 1994), several women in this study offer that care to their parents, albeit with careful emotional limitations to protect themselves.

Self-in-relation theory not only explains the coping strategies that women used, it explains as well many of the causal factors that either facilitated or enabled the abuse. Silence in the family, paternal absence, and lack of maternal affirmation are all reflections of social expectations that value independence and autonomy for men, and that devalue relational skills. When these women were children, men were discouraged from learning how to express emotional caring and responsibility even more than now. It was an accepted norm then for well-meaning fathers to be emotionally detached from their families. Women who did not receive affirmation themselves as female children were unable to give that sense of validation to their daughters. Susanna points out that her mother not only padded her dresses to make her breasts bigger, but she did that for

herself. This was part of how she defined being a woman. Lydia, who felt that her mother did not affirm or validate her, used her second husband's words to describe her mother:

"He had never met anybody as self effacing as my mother."

The women in this study have lived in an explicit historical framework (Stewart, 1994) that is part of their experience. This framework includes the social norms and values for white families from the 1920's to the present. These norms influenced family structure, expectations for men and women, and acceptance of (or lack of acceptance of) sexual issues, including incest. During this time there were few resources for either children or families. There were few, if any, supports for families that promoted communication and relational responsibility, and little emphasis or awareness of parenting skills for average parents. Not only was there no public knowledge of the problem of child sexual abuse, there were few or no resources for survivors of that abuse. Not until the 1970's did this problem come to public attention. Only then did clinicians begin to learn how to help survivors of the abuse. Knowing how few resources these women have had, their stories of endurance, perseverance, and gaining their voices are quite remarkable.

In summary, child sexual abuse disrupted the personal and interpersonal lives of the older women in this study. That experience resonated across their lives and complicated, in some cases, developmental tasks of aging. The experience of the abuse was compounded by the social expectations and values for women, because these gender roles caused similar negative effects, complicating issues such as loss of voice and

acquiescence. Self-in-relation theory, which proposes that women develop their sense of self in the context of relationships, helps to explain women's coping patterns of endurance, perseverance, making choices, and gaining their voice.

Implications for Social Work

The results in this study are based on a small sample of white women, which limits generalization of the findings. However, the 'enduring' quality of the effects of the abuse is an important finding of this study that has implications not only for other older women who were sexually abused as children, but also for younger women who face similar tasks as they grow old. Clearly the abuse may have developmental aspects. The question is not whether any particular woman can cope with the abuse and leave it in one stage of her life. As Herman (1991) points out, the goal of recounting trauma is integration, not exorcism. Trauma can be transformed into something else, as women in this study demonstrate, but that transformation may be a lifetime process, not a brief intervention. As social workers, we need to be able to help prepare women who have been abused to cope with that abuse throughout their lives.

Older women are frequently ignored, neglected, or denigrated in this society (LaGodna, 1988). They grew up during a time when gender roles limited women's options and choices even more than they currently do. These limitations can affect women's confidence and restrict their self-development. Women in this study had to cope not only with the limitations of gender, but with the negative impact of child sexual abuse.

Practitioners who work with older women can become more aware of the potential of

sexual abuse to interfere with those women's self-esteem and confidence as well as their aging processes.

Social workers frequently see elderly women because of poverty, physical, social or mental health needs (Kerson, 1989). Several standardized multidimensional assessments have been developed for use by social workers and other health care providers with the elderly (Kane & Kane, 1981). These assessments generally assess social and economic resources as well as mental and physical health and the capacity to perform daily activities of living. The three most widely used multidimensional assessments used with the elderly are OARS, CARE, and PACE (Kane & Kane, 1981). None of these instruments ask questions about sexual abuse. Because nearly 6 million older women may have been sexually abused, and because the results from this study indicate that sexual abuse impacts women in old age, adding questions to these instruments about that abuse could alert practitioners with the elderly to potential problems.

Older women may have greater difficulty talking about sexual problems than younger women, because they grew up in more sexually repressive times. Those who work with the elderly may also feel discomfort in asking an older woman questions about sexuality because of cultural ageist/sexist values, or personal discomfort with the intimate details of people the same age as our parents (Genevay & Katz, 1991). The results of this study indicate that sexual dysfunction was common consequence of the child sexual abuse. At the same time, Lydia's story of overcoming the sexual tension that was a

consequence of the abuse indicates that sexual problems can be overcome with attention and sensitivity. It is important that those working with older women be sensitive to the implications of child sexual abuse for sexual problems and older women's potential for change.

The triptych of life stories reinforces the belief that how we tell our stories is part of the pattern of coping with stressful events. Clearly, telling one's story is part of the transformative process. To quote Herman (1991) again: "resolution of trauma is never final; recovery is never complete." That does not mean, however, that trauma is the defining experience of a person's life. As Jack (1991) points out, being able to tell one's story and being heard clearly have implications for maintaining self integrity. Validation is part of the social worker's role and this study indicates that we must learn to validate not just the survivor's story, but also learn to understand and respect the way that she tells it. How we tell stories is part of the story. providing clues to understanding how we cope with trauma.

In closing, I would emphasize these women's strengths. That they endured the abuse for so long is as much reflection of social conditioning and developmental factors as it is a reflection of their individual responses. They persevered despite the effects of the abuse, exhibiting self-determination within the constraints of the abuse and gender roles that limited their choices. Perseverance too is a reflection of their struggle and their position in society. Child sexual abuse did not define their destiny. They managed to work and educate themselves, to raise their children with the love and respect that they

themselves did not receive. That is not to say that the abuse did not extract terrible costs, but these women told their stories of endurance, gaining a voice, and transcendence, demonstrating resourcefulness and resiliency despite the abuse.

Bibliography

- Agar, M., & Hobbs, J. R. (1982). Interpreting discourse: Coherence and the analysis of ethnographic interviews. Discourse Processes, 5, 1-32.
- Alexander, P. C., & Lufer, S. L. (1987). Family characteristics and long-term consequences associated with sexual abuse. Archives of Sexual Behavior, 16, 235-245.
- Alexander, P. C., & Schaeffer, C. M. (1994). A typology of incestuous families based on cluster analysis. Journal of Family Psychology, 8, 458-470.
- Allers, C., Benjack, K., & Allers, N. (1992). Unresolved childhood sexual abuse: Are older adults affected? Journal of Counseling and Development, 71(8), 14-17.
- American Psychiatric Association (1987). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Backer J. H., & Meier, L. C. (1993). Testing a model of coping effectiveness in older women. Journal of Women and Aging, 5, 79-96.
- Bagley, C., & Ramsey, R., (1986). Disrupted childhood and vulnerability to sexual assault: Long-term sequelae with implications for counseling. Journal of Social Work and Human Sexuality, 4, 33-48.
- Barrett, M. J. (1993). Mothers' role in incest: Neither dysfunctional women nor dysfunctional theories when both are explored in their entirety. Journal of child Sexual Abuse, 2, 141-143.
- Beitchman, J., Zucker, K., Hood, J., & DaCosta, G. (1992). A review of the long-term effects of child sexual abuse. Child Abuse and Neglect, 16, 101-118.
- Bennett, Gillian. (1986). Narrative as expository discourse. Journal of American Folklore, 99, 415-434.
- Birns, B., & Meyer, S. (1993). Mothers' role in incest: dysfunctional women or dysfunctional theories. Journal of child Sexual Abuse, 2, 127-135.
- Briere, J. (1989). Therapy for adults molested as children: Beyond survival. New York: Springer.
- Briere, J. (1992). Child abuse trauma: Theory and treatment of the lasting effects. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Briere, J., & Runtz, M. (1988). Symptomatology associated with childhood sexual victimization in a nonclinical adult sample. Child Abuse & Neglect, 12, 51-59.

- Briere, J., & Runtz, M. (1993). Childhood sexual abuse: long-term sequelae and implications for psychological assessment. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 8, 312-321.
- Browne, A., & Finkelhor, D. (1986). Initial and long-term effects: A review of the research. In D. Finkelhor (Ed.) A Sourcebook on child sexual abuse. (pp. 143-179). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Pub.
- Bruner, J. (1987). Life as narrative. Social Research, 54, 11-32.
- Buford, B. (1996, June 24-July 1). The seductions of storytelling. New Yorker, pp. 11.
- Cameron, C. (1994). Women survivors confronting their abusers: Issues, decisions, and outcomes. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 3(1), 7-35.
- Carlsen, M. (1991). Creative Aging. New York: Norton.
- Charmaz, K. (1990). 'Discovering' chronic illness: using grounded theory. Social Science Medicine, 11, 1161-1172.
- Clarke, K. M. (1993). Creation of meaning in incest survivors. Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly, 7, 195-203.
- Cohler, B. J. (1991). The life story and the study of resilience and response to adversity. Journal of Narrative and Life History, 1, 169-200.
- Cole, P., & Putnam, F. (1992). Effect of incest on self and social functioning: A developmental psychopathology perspective. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 60, 174-183.
- Cole P. M., Woolger, C., Power, T. G., & Smith K. D. (1992). Parenting difficulties among adult survivors of father-daughter incest. Child Abuse & Neglect, 16, 239-249.
- Conte, J., & Schuerman, J. (1987a). Factors associated with an increased impact of child sexual abuse. Child Abuse and Neglect, 11, 201-211.
- Conte, J. (1986). Sexual abuse and the family: A critical analysis. Journal of Psychotherapy and the Family, 2, 113-126.
- Cortazzi, M. (1993). Narrative analysis. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Courtois, C. (1980). Studying and counseling women with past incest experience. Victimology, 5, 322-334.
- DeYoung, M. (1994). Women as mothers and wives in paternally incestuous families: coping with role conflict. Child Abuse & Neglect, 18, 73-83.

- DiPalma, L.M. (1994). Patterns of coping and characteristics of high-functioning incest survivors. Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 8(2), 82-90.
- Donaldson, M. & Gardner, R. (1985). Diagnosis and treatment of traumatic stress among women after childhood incest. In D. Figley (Ed.) Trauma and its wake. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Downs, W. (1993). Developmental considerations for the effects of childhood sexual abuse. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 8, 331-345.
- Druacker, C. B. (1992). Counseling survivors of childhood sexual abuse. London: Sage.
- Edwards, J., & Alexander, P. (1992). The contribution of family background to the long-term adjustment of women sexually abused as children. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 7, 306-321.
- Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: Reinventing the self and other in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 70-82). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Finkelhor D., & Browne, A. (1985). The traumatic impact of child sexual abuse: A conceptualization. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 55, 530-540.
- Finkelhor, D. (1984). Child sexual abuse, new theory and research. New York: Free Press.
- Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I., & Smith, C. (1989). Sexual abuse and its relationship to later sexual satisfaction, marital status, religion and attitudes. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 4, 379-399.
- Friedrich, W. (1988). Behavior problems in sexually abused children: An adaptational perspective. In (Eds.), The lasting effects of child sexual abuse (pp. 157-171). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gee, J. P (1985). The narrativization of experience in the oral style. Journal of Education, 167, 9-35.
- Gelinas, D. (1983). The persisting negative effects of incest. Psychiatry, 46, 312-332.
- Genevay, B. & Katz R. S. (1990). Countertransference and older clients. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Glaser, B. B. (1978). Theoretical sensitivity. Mill Valley: Sociology Press.

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine Publishing Co.
- Goodrich, T. J. (1991). Women, power, and family therapy: What's wrong with this picture? In T. J. Goodrich (Ed.), Women and power: Perspectives for family therapy pp. 3-35). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Goodwin, J., McCarthy, T., & Divasto, P. (1981). Prior incest in mothers of abused children. Child Abuse and Neglect, *5*, 87-96.
- Greenwald, E., Leitenberg, H., Cado, S., & Tarran, M. (1990). Childhood sexual abuse: Long-term effects on psychological and sexual functioning in a nonclinical and nonstudent sample of adult women. Child Abuse & Neglect, *14*, 503-513.
- Gross, R. J., Doerr, H., & Caldirola, D., Guzinski, G. M., & Ripley, H. S. (1980). Borderline syndrome and incest in chronic pelvic pain patients. International Journal of Psychiatry Medicine, *10*, 79-96.
- Grossman, F. K., & Moore, R. P. (1994). Against the odds: Resiliency in an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse. In C. E. Franz & A. J. Stewart (Eds.), Women creating lives: Identities, resilience, and resistance (pp. 71-82). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing Paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Haliday, M. K. (1973). Explorations in the functions of language. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hanson, R. F., Lipovsky, J. A., & Saunders, B. E. (1994). Characteristics of fathers in incest families. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, *9*, 155-169.
- Harter, S., Alexander, P., & Neimeyer, R. (1988). Long-term effects of incestuous child abuse in college women: Social adjustment, social cognition, and family characteristics. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, *56*, 5-8.
- Harvey, J., Orbuch, T., Chwalisz, K., & Garwood, G. (1991). Coping with sexual assault: The roles of account-making and confiding. Journal of Traumatic Stress, *4*, 515-531.
- Hays, K. (1987). The conspiracy of silence revisited: group therapy with adult survivors of incest. Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry, *39*, 143-156.
- Herman, J. (1981). Father-daughter incest. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Herman, J. (1992). Trauma and recovery. New York: Basic Books.
- Herman, J., & Schatzow, E. (1987). Recovery and verification of memories of childhood sexual trauma. Psychoanalytic Psychology, 4(1): 1-14.
- Herman, J., Russell, D., & Trocki, K. (1986). Long-term effects of incestuous abuse in childhood. American Journal of Psychiatry 143, 1293-1296.
- Herrnstein-Smith, B. (1982). Narrative versions, narrative theories. In W. T. J. Mitchell (Ed.). On narrative pp. 200-209. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Hoagwood, K. (1990). Blame and adjustment among women sexually abused as children. Women and Therapy, 9, 89-110.
- Hooyman, N., & Kiyak, O. (1993). Social gerontology, Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Jack, D. C. (1991). Silencing the self: Women and depression. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Janikowski, T. P., & Glover, N. M. (1994) Incest and substance abuse: Implications for treatment professionals. Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 11, 177-183.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). Shattered assumptions: Towards a new psychology of trauma. New York: The Free Press.
- Jehu, D., Gazan, M., & Klassen, C. (1984-1985). Common therapeutic targets among women who were sexually abused in childhood. Journal of Social Work & Human Sexuality, 3, 25-45.
- Johnson, B., & Kenkel, M. B. (1991). Stress, coping and adjustment in female adolescent incest victims. Child Abuse and Neglect, 15, 293-305.
- Joseph, C. G., & Rose, M. K. (1994). Female incest survivors: Caregiving for aging parents. Journal of Women and Aging, 6, 53-68.
- Joy, S. (1987). Retrospective presentations of incest: treatment strategies for use with adult women. Journal of Counseling and Development, 65(2): 317-19.
- Jumper, S. A. (1995). A meta-analysis of the relationship of child sexual abuse to adult psychological adjustment. Child Abuse & Neglect, 19, 715-728.
- Kane, R., & Kane, R. (1981). Assessing the Elderly. Lexington: Lexington Books.
- Kaplan, A. (1986). The "self-in-relation": Implications for depression in women. Psychotherapy, 23, 234-243.

- Kerby, A. P. (1991). Narrative and the self. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kerson, T. (1989). Women and aging: A clinical social work perspective. In J. Garner & S. Mercer (Eds.), Women as they age. (pp. 123-148). New York: Haworth Press.
- Knight, R. (1986). Psychotherapy with older adults. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Pub.
- Kondora, L. L. (1993). Heideggerian hermeneutical analysis of survivors of incest. Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 25, 11-16.
- Labov, W. (1972). The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. In W. Labov (Ed.), Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular (pp. 345-396). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, W. (1982). Speech actions and reactions in personal narrative. In D. Tannen (Ed.), Analyzing discourse: Text and talk. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helms (Ed.), Essays on the verbal and visual arts, pp. 12-44. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- LaGodna, G. (1988). Aging women and depression: Unresolved conceptual, etiologic, and epidemiologic issues. Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 9, 285-298.
- Lamb, S., & Edgar-Smith, S. (1994). Aspects of disclosure: Mediators of outcome of childhood sexual abuse. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 9, 307-326.
- Langellier, K. (1989). Personal narratives: Perspectives on theory and research. Text and Performance Quarterly, 9, 243-276.
- Leitenberg, H., Greenwald, E., & Cado, S. (1992). A retrospective study of long-term methods of coping with having been sexually abused during childhood. Child Abuse and Neglect, 16, 399-407.
- Linde, C. (1993). Life Stories: The creation of coherence. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Long, P. & Jackson, J. (1993). Childhood coping strategies and the adult adjustment of female sexual abuse victims. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 2, 23-39.
- MacFarlane, K. (1986). Sexual abuse of young children. New York: Guilford Press.
- Maltz, W. (1991). The sexual healing journey: A guide for survivors of sexual abuse. New York: Harper Collins.
- Masson, J. M. (1984). The assault on truth: Freud's suppression of the seduction theory. New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux.

- McCann, L. I., Sakheim, D. K., & Abrahamson, D. J. (1988). Trauma and victimization: A model of psychological adaptation. The Counseling Psychologist, 16, 531-594.
- Meiselman, K. C. (1978). Incest: A psychological study of causes and effects with treatment recommendations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, J. B. (1984). Toward a new psychology of women. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Miller, J. B. (1991). The development of women's sense of self. In J. V. Jordan, A. G. Kaplan, J. B. Miller, I. P. Stiver, & J. L. Surrey (Eds.), Women's growth in connection: Writings from the stone center. New York: Guilford Press.
- Mishler, E.G. (1986). Research interviewing: Context and narrative. Cambridge Press: Harvard University Press.
- Mishler, E.G. (1991). Representing discourse: The rhetoric of transcription. Journal of Narrative and History, 1, 255-280.
- Mishler, E. (1995). Models of narrative analysis: A typology. Journal of Narrative & Life History, 5, 87-123).
- Morrison, J. (1989). Childhood sexual histories of women with somatization disorder. American Journal of Psychiatry, 146, 239-241.
- Morrow, S. L., & Smith, M. L. (1995). Constructions of survival and coping by women who have survived childhood sexual abuse. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 42, 24-33.
- Newberger, C., & DeVos, E., (1988). Abuse and victimization: A life-span developmental perspective. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 58, 505-511.
- Nurius, P., Furrey, J., & Berliner, L. (1992). Coping capacity among women with abusive partners, Violence and Victimology, 7, 229-243.
- Olafson, W., Corwin, D. L., & Summit, R. C. (1993). Modern history of child sexual abuse awareness: Cycles of discovery and suppression. Child Abuse and Neglect, 17, 7-24.
- Orbuch, T. L., Harvey, J. H., Davis, S. H., & Merbach, N. J. (1994). Account-making and confiding as acts of meaning in response to sexual assault. Journal of Family Violence, 9, 249-264.
- Parratt, J. (1993). The experience of childbirth for survivors of incest. Midwifery, 14, 26-39.
- Peacock, J. L. & Holland, D. C. (1993). The narrated self: Life stories in process. Ethos, 21 (4) 367-383.

- Peters, S. D. (1988). Child sexual abuse and later psychological problems. In G. E. Wyatt & G. J. Powell (Eds.), Lasting effects of child sexual abuse (pp. 101-118). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Peters, S. D., Wyatt, G. E., & Finkelhor, D. (1986). Prevalence. In D. Finkelhor (Ed.), A sourcebook on child sexual abuse (pp. 15-60). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Polanyi, L. (1985). Telling the American story: a structural and cultural analysis of conversational storytelling. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). Narrative knowing and the human sciences. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Poston, C., & Lison, K. (1989). Reclaiming our lives. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
- Ray, K. C., Jackson, J. L., & Townsley, R. M. (1991). Family environments of victims of intrafamilial and extrafamilial child sexual abuse, Journal of Family Violence, *6*, 365-375.
- Reis, S. D., & Heppner, P. P. (1993). Examination of coping resources and family adaptation in mothers and daughters of incestuous versus nonclinical families. Journal of Counseling Psychology, *40*, 100-108.
- Riessman, C. K. (1988). Worlds of difference: contrasting experience in marriage and narrative style. In A. D. Todd & S. Fisher (Eds.), Gender and discourse (pp. 151-17). New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Co.
- Riessman, C. K. (1990). Divorce Talk: Women and men make sense of personal relationships. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Riessman, C. K. (1991). Beyond reductionism: Narrative genres in divorce accounts. Journal of Narrative and Life History, *1*, 41-68.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). Narrative Analysis. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Roesler, T. A. (1994). Reactions to disclosure of childhood sexual abuse: The effect on adult symptoms. Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, *182*, 618-624.
- Roesler, T. A., & Wind, T. W. (1994). Telling the secret: Adult women describe their disclosures of incest. Journal of Interpersonal violence, *9*, 327-338.
- Rosaldo, R. (1993). Culture & truth: the remaking of social analysis. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Rosenthal, J. A. (1988). Patterns of reported child abuse and neglect. Child Abuse and Neglect, *12*, 263-276.

- Rosenwald, B., & Ochberg, R. (1992). Introduction: Life stories, cultural politics, and self-understanding. In G. Rosenwald & R. Ochberg (Eds.), Storied Lives: The cultural politics of self-understanding. New Haven, CT: Yale Press.
- Roth, S., & Lebowitz, L. (1988). The experience of sexual trauma. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 1, 79-107).
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I.S. (1995). Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rush, F. (1980). The Best kept secret: sexual abuse of children. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Russell, D. (1984). Sexual exploitation: Rape, child sexual abuse, and workplace harassment. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Russell, D. (1986). The secret trauma: Sexual abuse of children. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Salter, A. C. (1995). Transforming trauma: A guide to understanding and treating adult survivors of child sexual abuse. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sanderson, C. (1991). Counselling adult survivors of child sexual abuse. London: Jessica Kingsley Pub.
- Sarbin, T. R. (1995). A narrative approach to "repressed memories." Journal of Narrative & Life History, 5, 51-66.
- Schatzow, E., & Herman, J. (1989). Breaking secrecy, adult survivors disclose to their families. Psychiatric Clinics of North America 12(2) 337-349.
- Schonberg, I. J. (1992). The distortion of the role of mother in child sexual abuse, Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 1, 47-61.
- Sheikh, J., Swales, P., Kravitz, J., Bail, G., & Taylor, C. (1994). Childhood abuse history in older women with panic disorder. The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 1, 75-77.
- Silver, R., Boon, C., & Stones, M. (1983). Searching for meaning in misfortune: Making sense of incest. Journal of Social issues, 39:81-102.
- Silverman, D. (1993). Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Slavney, P. R., & McHugh, P. R. (1984). Life stories and meaningful connections: Reflections on a clinical method in psychiatry and medicine. Perspectives in Biology and Medicine, 27, 279-288.

- Smith, D. W., & Saunders, B. E. (1995). Personality characteristics of father/perpetrators and nonoffending mothers in incest families: Individual and dyadic analyses. Child Abuse & Neglect, *19*, 607-617.
- Stewart, A. J. (1994) Toward a feminist strategy of studying women's lives. In C. E. Franz & A. J. Stewart (Eds.), Women creating lives: Identities, resilience, and resistance (pp. 11-36). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Stein, J. A., Golding, J. M., Siegel, J. M., Burnam, M. A., & Sorenson, S. B. (1988). Long-term psychological sequelae of child sexual abuse: The Los Angeles epidemiologic catchment area Study. In G. E. Wyatt & G. J. Powell (Eds.), Lasting effects of child sexual abuse (pp. 135-154). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Surrey, J. L. (1991). The "self-in-relation": A theory of women's development. In J. V. Jordan, A. G. Kaplan, J. B. Miller, I. P. Stiver, & J. L. Surrey (Eds.), Women's growth in connection: Writings from the stone center. New York: Guilford Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1984). Qualitative research methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Summit, R. (1982). Beyond Belief: The reluctant discovery of incest. In M. Kirkpatrick (Ed.) Women's sexual experience. New York: Plenum Press.
- Truesdell, D. L., McNeil, J. S., Deschner, J. P. (1986). Incidence of wife abuse in incestuous families. Social Work, *31* 138-140.
- Tsai, M., Feldman-Summers, S., & Edgar, M. (1979). Childhood molestation: Variables related to differential impact of psychosexual functioning in adult women. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, *88*, 407-417.
- Tsai, M., & Wagner, N. (1978). Therapy groups for women sexually molested as children. Archives of Sexual Behavior, *7*(5) 417-427.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1982). Episodes as units of discourse analysis. In D. Tannen (Ed.), Analyzing discourse: Text and talk. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Walker, E., Katon, W., Harrop-Griffiths, J., Holm, L., Russo, J., & Hickok, L. R. (1988). Relationship of chronic pelvic pain to psychiatric diagnosis and childhood sexual abuse. American Journal of Psychiatry, *145*, 75-80.
- Wiehe, V. R. (1990). Sibling Abuse: Hidden, physical, emotional, and sexual trauma. New York: Lexington Books.
- Wind, T. W., & Silvern, L. (1994). Parenting and family stress as mediators of the long-term effects of child abuse. Child Abuse and Neglect, *18*, 439-453.
- Wortman, C. B. (1983). Coping with victimization: Conclusions and implications for future research. Journal of Social Issues, *39*, 195-221.

- Wyatt, G., & Newcomb, M. (1990). Internal and external mediators of women's sexual abuse in childhood. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 58, 758-768.
- Wynkoop, T. F., Capps, S. C., & Priest, B. J. (1995). Incidence and prevalence of child sexual abuse: A critical review of data collection procedures. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 4, 49-66.

Appendix A
Flyer for Recruiting Participants

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!!!!

Women age 55 and older: Volunteers needed

Were You Molested as a Child? Untold Stories

What is child sexual abuse? It includes attempted intercourse, oral sex, sodomy, genital touching, sexual kissing, pornographic picture taking, sexual exhibitionism, or forced or coerced sexual behavior imposed on a child.

Did anyone ever touch you as a child in a way that made you feel uncomfortable? Were you molested as a child? Although many younger women have talked about the impact of child sexual abuse on their lives, little is known of the experience of women over the age of 55 who were abused. Women age 55 and older are asked to tell their story and how that experience affected them.

The goal of this research is to increase the understanding of the strengths and problems of women age 55 and older who were sexually abused as children and to provide better services for all women still struggling with that experience.

Please call Martha Farris at (206) 284-5806 for more information. I am a Ph.D. student, University of Washington, School of Social Work. Please consider participating in this study. All information is confidential. Your story and experience can make a valuable contribution to a little known or discussed issue.

Please Contact: Martha Farris (206) 284-5806

Appendix B
University of Washington
Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
Consent To Be A Research Subject

Older Women and Child Sexual Abuse: Untold Stories
Investigator: Martha Farris, Ph.C., Doctoral student, School of Social Work, 284-5806.

Purpose and Benefits

Martha Farris is conducting a study to explore the experience of women, age 55 and older, who were sexually abused as children. This research is intended to answer questions about the experience of those older women. This information may help younger women who were sexually abused through the aging process, as well as be of value to older women still struggling with that experience.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, the following will occur: You will be interviewed from one to three times. The interview will last approximately one hour. As the research progresses, additional questions may be generated and you may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview to clarify points discussed in the initial one to three interviews. The interviews will take place at any location that is convenient, maintains your privacy, and is acceptable to you. The interviews will consist of questions about your life, including your family history and your perceptions of the influence of child sexual abuse on your life. The interviews will be tape recorded. Participation is strictly voluntary and you can drop out of the study at any time. Participation in the study will in no way affect any services that you already receive.

Risks, Stress, or Discomfort

There are some possible risks from being in this study. Answering some of the questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. Talking about child sexual abuse may bring into your awareness anxiety or discomfort about that experience that you may not have been aware of previously. Questions include: "You mentioned that you were sexually abused when you were young. Can you tell me if that experience has influenced your life?" You are free to refuse to answer any questions or to stop the interview at any time.

Other information

The information you provide] will be handled confidentially. The audio tapes will be used instead of note-taking during the interview to assure accuracy of data collection. The tapes will be transcribed within three months and will be kept indefinitely. The tapes will be locked in a file cabinet, and only the investigator and the transcriber will have access to them. Identifiable written data will be retained indefinitely and the investigator and members of her dissertation committee will have access to it. No identities will be used in any reports or on the transcriptions or in any publications resulting from this study.

There are no adverse consequences if you choose not to participate in this study. Participation in research is voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate or to withdraw at any point in this study.

Signature of the Investigator

Date

This study described above has been explained to me by Martha Farris, who has offered to answer any questions I may have. She can be reached at 284-5806 if I have any further questions. I voluntarily consent to participate in this activity. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and understand that future questions I may have about the research or about my rights as a subject will be answered by Martha Farris, as indicated above.

Signature of Subject

Date

cc: Subject

Appendix C
Interview Guide:

1. Knowing that I'm interested in the experience of older women who were sexually abused as children, could you tell me your life story
2. Could you describe to me what is your life is like now?
3. Has anyone ever threatened or mistreated you? What do you mean by mistreated? Could you describe it? Can you tell me more about it? Ask about physical discipline.
4. Can you tell me if you've had periods of depression or times that you just felt down, or sad in your life? What were those times like for you?
5. I'm interested in knowing how you may have dealt with problems in your life? Could you describe any episodes of conflict in your life? Was coping with the sexual abuse different from coping with other problems? If there was conflict with someone close to you, what was that conflict like for you?
6. You mentioned that you were sexually abused when you were young. Can you tell me if that experience has influenced your life? How do you think your life would have been different if this had not happened?

Appendix D
Table of Participants and Abuse Characteristics.

Subject	Current Age (Birth Year)	Type Of Abuse	Perpetrator	Frequency Of Abuse	Duration Of Abuse	Age At Onset Of Abuse
Susanna	58 (1936)	Vaginal Touching Masturbation	Father Brother	Several Times Weekly	Years	6 or 7
Anne	59 (1936)	Attempted Rape	Father	Once	Once	13
Virginia	57 (1938)	Sexual Touching Attempted Molestation	Father Two Uncles	Often 3 Times	Years 3 Times	Puberty 7
Alice	75 (1920)	Attempted Molestation Intercourse	Father Uncle A Uncle B	Once Often	Once Years	12 3 10
Lydia	58 (1937)	Sexual Touching	Cousin	Often	Several Years	10
Jean	68 (1927)	Vaginal Touching	Great Uncles	1 Or 2 Times	Once Or Twice	7 or 8
Cathy	70 (1925)	Psychologic Incest	Father	2 Times	Twice	Puberty
Zella	65 (1930)	Vaginal Touching Masturbation	Family Friend Uncle	Once Once	Once Once	7 or 8
Louise	67 (1929)	Masturbation Vaginal Fondling Masturbation	Father Uncle	Several Times Often	Years Years	Puberty Puberty
Belinda	67 (1928)	Fondling Intercourse	Father	Often	Years	5 9
Angela	67 (1927)	Fondling Intercourse	Grandfather	Often Once	Years Once	9 11
Irene	62 (1933)	Vaginal Touching	Family Friend	Once	Once	9

Vita

Martha Lynne Farris

EDUCATION

The University of Washington, Seattle, Washington
Ph.D. in Social Welfare. 1996.

University of Washington, Seattle, Washington
MSW 1991.

University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska
M.S. Horticulture, 1985.

University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska
B.A. Biology, 1981.

PUBLICATIONS

Farris, M., & Gibson, G. W. (1992) The older woman sexually abused as a child: Untold stories and unanswered questions. Journal of Women & Aging, 4(3), 31-44.

Farris, M., Bates, R., Resnick, H., & Stabler, N. (1994). Evaluation of computer games' impact upon cognitively impaired frail elderly. In H. Resnick (Ed.), Electronic tools for social work practice and education. New York: Haworth Press Inc.

Farris, M. An exploratory investigation of older woman sexually abused as children. Presented to the Gerontological Society of America 44th Annual Scientific Meeting, San Francisco, November 22-26, 1991.

Uehara, E., Farris, M. Graham, T., Morelli, P., Phillips, R., Smith, L., Bates, R., & Bryson, B. (1996). A collaborative-comparative approach to learning qualitative data analysis. Journal of Teaching in Social Work, in press.

Farris, M. (1985). Weed control in annual strawberries. Master's Thesis, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska.