

Dancing with the Patriarchy: The Politics of Sexual Abuse

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For too long, the collective consciousness of contemporary Western society has promoted an idyllic image of the family as a safe haven in an otherwise turbulent, violent, and unsafe world. Closer examination of the nuclear family, however, provides considerable evidence that this unit of social organization is actually a fertile environment for deadly aggression.

Nationally, more than two million cases of child abuse were reported during 1986 alone. That number included more than 314,000 cases of sexual abuse (American Humane Association 1986). The actual number of children who are being abused is probably significantly larger than the number of reported cases. Underreporting is especially true for incidents of sexual abuse, which are generally shrouded in secrecy. For example, a nationwide survey of 2,627 adults interviewed with assurances of anonymity was published by the *Los Angeles Times* on August 25, 1985. Twenty-two percent of those people interviewed acknowledged that they had been sexually abused during their childhood (Finkelhor, Hotling, Louis, and Smith 1990).

A problem such as sexual abuse that, conservatively, affects between 20 and 30 percent of the American population must not be ignored. Despite the frequency of sexual abuse, however, few children feel the safety or support that allows them to disclose their experience. The 1985 *Los Angeles Times* poll indicated that fewer than half of those people who had been victimized told anybody. Ten percent of those people who acknowledged their abuse said that they did not disclose their sexual molestation because they did not consider their abuse to be serious. Seventy percent of those who did disclose their victimization reported that no effective follow-up action occurred.

Most authorities now agree that at least one of every five girls will be sexually abused before the age of eighteen (Russell 1986). There is less agreement on the prevalence with which boys are sexually abused, but a growing number of clinicians who work with sexual abuse are discovering that males probably are sexually victimized just as frequently as females (Dimock 1988;

and actual frequency of sexual abuse. Because social norms do not actively encourage the identification and reporting of sexual victimization involving males, statistics tend to reflect fewer incidents than actually occur.

In general, American society encourages a collective denial that children are the victims of sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, it remains the exception rather than the rule that reported incidents of child sexual abuse are believed and responded to appropriately. As I will discuss later, existing laws in most jurisdictions make it even more difficult to prosecute when the alleged victim is male, thereby further discouraging people from reporting cases involving males.

Defining the Issue

The research that has been conducted to facilitate our understanding of child sexual abuse has been limited in scope. Theories that have been postulated to explain sexual abuse have tended to focus on dysfunctional family dynamics, stress on the family unit, intergenerational patterns within specific families, or individual psychopathology. Most of these theories have proven to be of limited value in promoting a thorough understanding of the problem or in generating effective treatment interventions.

Most discussions of child sexual abuse focus on presenting symptoms and methods for clinical intervention. Demographic or statistical data are highlighted to clarify prevalence rates and high-risk populations; emotional or behavioral indicators are offered to facilitate the identification of victims; techniques and strategies for therapeutic treatment are documented to promote healing and recovery; vignettes and testimonials are chronicled to emphasize the human pain and trauma that afflict survivors of sexual abuse. Occasionally, presentations of child sexual abuse will include a footnote to acknowledge that this problem occurs within a larger sociopolitical context.

This chapter is based on the premise that the sociopolitical context is more than just an ancillary factor. Rather, it is the essential factor requiring intervention if we are to end the sexual maltreatment of children in our society. This chapter seeks to reverse our usual field of vision, as the context in which child sexual abuse occurs is examined as foreground rather than background.

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Examining the Context

As a beginning point, it is essential to acknowledge that this problem actually reflects a major social disorder that is more pervasive and complex than isolated family units that become dysfunctional or particular individuals who demonstrate psychopathology. The very fabric of our society is designed to perpetuate this problem while encouraging denial that any serious problem exists.

Reports of traumatic sexual experiences during childhood have been successfully silenced for years in one or a variety of ways. We have all heard adages such as the following:

Children are inclined toward fantasies; they are not credible because they cannot be consistent and truthful about events.

Adult reports of childhood sexual abuse are the product of a hysterical personality.

The home is a sacred domain; allowing children to make allegations against a parent threatens the sanctity of the family.

Unwitting adults sometimes fall victim to the seductive energies of promiscuously inclined children.

Until recently, authorities failed to acknowledge physical or sexual abuse of children as inappropriate and, therefore, deserving of intervention on behalf of victims. U.S. laws have historically been more progressive in protecting our domesticated animals than our children. A century ago, there was an American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but there was no such organization for children. The first recorded protective intervention for a child was accomplished in the early 1870s in New York City through the use of an animal protection law (Kempe and Helfer 1972).

In 1874, as a direct result of that case, New York City established the nation's first society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which provided the initial framework for child protective services. Similar societies were gradually initiated in other cities throughout the United States and Europe. A primary thrust of these early efforts to address the maltreatment of children actually focused more on implementing child labor laws to counteract the negative repercussions of the Industrial Revolution than on the dangers of abuse within domestic settings.

Consequently, despite this flurry of activity in the late nineteenth century on behalf of children who were physically mistreated, the needs of children who were sexually abused were never similarly acknowledged. Within a relatively brief span of time, even efforts to advocate for children who were physically abused fell out of vogue. Throughout most of the twentieth century,

It was not until the early 1960s that serious attention to child abuse again emerged. The current wave of interest in the physical and sexual abuse of children was catalyzed by C. Henry Kempe, a physician who proposed the term *battered child syndrome* to focus professional and public attention on the large number of children who sustain nonaccidental injuries (Kempe 1968).

Also emerging from the social consciousness of the 1960s were a number of assertive and articulate women who provided strong leadership by speaking out about their own sexual victimization as adults or children. The rape crisis movement of the 1960s focused public attention beyond issues of physical abuse and provided an opportunity for a beginning of the child sexual abuse movement (Russell 1975; Millett 1969; Brownmiller 1975).

Most of the advocacy efforts regarding child sexual abuse have been limited to legislative change. Some important reforms have thereby been achieved. For example, in 1973 the U.S. Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, establishing a national center to provide supportive services related to the identification and treatment of child abuse. By the mid-1970s, most states had passed legislation to establish the framework for child protective service agencies with legal mandates to intervene on behalf of children who were physically or sexually abused.

These legislative reforms have not successfully challenged or changed the basic conditions of the larger social and political order, however, and few inroads have been made in addressing the problem in a meaningful way. For example, protective service agencies have achieved very minimal success in accomplishing their goal of protecting children. Limited funding has been allocated by local, state, and federal governments, resulting in too few and poorly trained staff. Very few legislative bodies have adequately defined forms of child abuse or established laws that govern conduct related to physical or sexual assault, thereby restricting protective service interventions on behalf of children.

Religious values that promote the sanctity of the home and the family also have discouraged concerned citizens and professionals from "intruding" into the private life of a child or parent, even when there is suspicion that a child is being abused. In fact, many of the more fundamentalist religious denominations focus so rigidly on fortifying the inviolability of the family as a prescribed entity that concerns for the safety and well-being of individual members within that defined unit may be disregarded.

Modern-day social agencies have been besieged by increased threats of litigation and decreased financial support from funding sources. As a result, the policies of many private and public social service agencies have begun to reflect a greater emphasis on protecting the health liability of the agency than on protecting the lives of the human beings served by that agency.

Even today, most graduate training programs do not offer courses devoted to disseminating information or training related to any aspect of child abuse. Those few professionals who are exposed to this issue are usually indoctrinated to treat the presenting symptomatology of the victim "objectively" and to avoid the "distractions" of the sociopolitical context in which the victimization occurred.

Although many services exist in the area of child abuse, there is no cohesive political analysis of this problem. Advocates within the child sexual abuse movement have displayed an alarming collective silence regarding the social or political factors that contribute to this problem. Consequently, little energy has been devoted to promoting a potent and activist movement to effect social and political change that is necessary to confront the maltreatment of children. The leaders of the child sexual abuse movement have been delinquent in their failure to mobilize a public outcry against the low priority and the limited resources given to protecting our children.

Instead, leaders within the field have been absorbed with gaining respectability, and they have generally not encouraged working alliances with more activist social change organizations. Most of the literature in the field of child sexual abuse has remained highly reductionist in nature, thereby avoiding many of the macro-level, fundamental political issues intertwined with this problem.

This apolitical perspective differs from the battered women's and rape crisis movements, in which considerable attention has been focused on challenging those aspects of society that contribute to the continued existence of battering and rape. Early leaders of the battered women's movement provided a means to understand this issue from a perspective other than victim pathology. Their successful effort to shift the focus away from victim pathology is instructive (see, for example, Martin 1976; Walker 1970; Dobash and Dobash 1979).

For years, professionals grappled unsuccessfully with how to understand and prevent the physical battering of a woman by her husband or partner. The standard question asked by professionals focused on the (female) victim: "Why doesn't she leave?" That question was based on numerous theoretical models and treatment interventions designed to resolve the problems of battering by treating the "victim's pathology." Advocates of battered women, many of whom had been physically assaulted themselves, eventually confronted the professional establishment and posed an important reframing of the question. Quite simply, by shifting the focus from the victim to the (male) perpetrator, the primary question then became "Why does he hit?" A different reality was thus introduced. In this reality, battering was no longer defined as victim pathology but as the responsibility of the batterer.

With a focus more appropriately on factors of accountability involving the perpetrator, it quickly became necessary to address the societal context of male aggression. In short, advocates for battered women have finally been

are required to acknowledge that the use of violence by males is actually sanctioned.

Unfortunately, advocates working to end the physical and sexual abuse of children have failed to address the underlying social and political dimensions of this issue. Whereas battered women were able to undertake networking that helped to coalesce a political movement, as a class children are disenfranchised and powerless. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for children who are sexually abused to communicate with one another. Therefore, individual children with shared experiences remain isolated. Children also do not have the right to vote and do not have easy access to leaders in the important decision-making institutions of our society (Finkelhor 1984).

The sexual abuse of children cannot be adequately addressed without acknowledging the fundamental political and social dimensions that govern our society. In the current societal structure, children are denied the avenues to advocate for their own needs. Therefore, adults must be willing to speak on behalf of children. Such secondhand advocacy tends to have less urgency and is more vulnerable to being abandoned or discounted. Furthermore, existing social norms create a climate that fosters the sexual abuse of children. The social norm that sanctions the victimization of females in general has promoted the problem of the sexual exploitation of women. However, the social norm that prescribes males as dominant creates an opportunity for males to internalize an experience of their own sexual victimization in ways that are dysfunctional. For example, many men who were victimized as children learn to overcompensate for the vulnerability and shame they feel by adopting hypermasculine roles. Those men who choose to recognize their membership in an oppressor class may experience a cognitive dissonance between their dominant status on the one hand and their victimization on the other.

Defining Sexual Abuse

To address the social and political dimensions of sexual abuse, it is important to have a working definition of the term. Unfortunately, the definition of abusive behavior toward children is still vague to many professionals and to most laypeople. The term *sexual abuse* refers to any sexual assault or sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent by an adult. Also included is any sexual interaction between two minors if there is at least three years' age difference or if there is a perceived significant difference in power between the victim and the offender. Included in this definition are genital stimulation, fondling, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration, voyeurism, exhibitionism, pornography, and prostitution.

is important to recognize that power and control frequently become eroticized in our culture. Implicit in the definitions of gender for most contemporary Western societies is the concept of male dominance and female submission. Dominance stirs sexual excitement in many men, thereby eroticizing relationships that are based on power and control. The sexual abuse of a child is not an issue of unbridled lust. Rather, it reflects a disrespect of boundaries between adult and child. Child sexual victimization is one example of the outcome of such eroticized dominance, and both male and female children are vulnerable to this kind of abuse of power and control.

An essential ingredient in sexually abusive behavior is a general lack of empathy by the adult for the child's stage of development and abilities. Additionally, the adult places the satisfaction of his or her own needs above those of the child. In so doing, the essence of child sexual abuse becomes clear: the exploitation of a child for the purpose of satisfying an adult.

In many ways, the basic fabric of our society creates a high-risk situation for the sexual abuse of children. While the stated norms of our social and political institutions impose taboos on the sexual exploitation of children, the underlying norms by which our society operates actually ignore or minimize the importance of those taboos. As long as these operational norms remain an undercurrent, their power is mysterious and the prevailing social environment actually sanctions the continued sexual abuse of children.

The Norms of Sexual Abuse

It is important to identify and examine the underlying norms that provide a social framework for the sexual abuse of children. The four basic norms that create a context for such abuse are chattel property, learned helplessness, sexual entitlement, and shroud of secrecy.

Chattel Property

The norm of chattel property is based on the concept that men have ownership of their wives and parents have ownership of their children. Perceiving a wife or child as property provides a justification for controlling him or her. Women and children in our society are encouraged to be passive, thereby conditioning them to accept a position of being controlled. In fact, strong negative social sanctions are focused on women and children who choose not to be passive. Strong women are perceived and labeled as "aggressive" and "hostile," while strong children are perceived and labeled as "defiant" and "rebellious."

Our society overvalues control. Therefore, having a compliant child is

often offered as proof of parental efficacy. It is easy to justify actions that might hurt a child in the name of discipline or as being for the good of the child. We are all familiar with the parental adage "It hurts me more than it hurts you," which frequently accompanies harsh physical punishment of a child by an adult. Teaching a child to be absolutely obedient is actually grooming him or her for victimization.

Enforced compliance discourages a child from thinking for himself or herself, from distinguishing a "good touch" from a "bad touch," from questioning any kind of authority, and from exercising independent judgment regarding the right to say no if one's personal boundaries are violated by another person who is perceived as having more power or authority.

Within our culture, the concept of chattel property is most readily embodied as male privilege. Members of society are conditioned to believe that men, by birth, have the privilege to control. This is especially prevalent—and dangerous—in the commonly held belief among men that they are guaranteed the right of sex on demand. Male privilege, when applied to the arena of human sexuality, creates the framework for a pervasive rape mentality. Unfortunately, many males who have been sexually abused also hold deep convictions of male privilege. Males who have been sexually victimized are more likely to be at greater risk for engaging in sexually offending behaviors if they also hold strong beliefs about male privilege.

Learned Helplessness

Learned helplessness is the ability to accept one's position of passivity in relationship to those who are defined as being more dominant, to such a degree that a person experiences psychological paralysis. Complicated psychosocial dynamics create a tapestry of factors that contribute to the emotional experience of learned helplessness. Lenore Walker, in her work with battered women, has pioneered in elaborating these dynamics (Walker 1970). Many women and children in our society function in this state of learned helplessness. For example, children are economically, legally, and socially dependent on their parents. When a child's safety is threatened, he or she may have no options for a safe haven. Obviously, few children have the economic resources or the skills and maturity to live independently.

Much progress has been made during recent years in promoting a more open discussion of the realities of child abuse. The enactment of child abuse reporting laws and the emergence of service providers who are willing to address the difficult issues presented by this social problem represent an enormous change. Nonetheless, such progress is still small compared to the magnitude of the problem. And there remain vast inconsistencies among those institutions—courts, mental health centers, and social service agencies—that are entrusted to deal with this problem.

face of information that challenges male privilege. When confronted with conflicting information presented by an adult and a child, most adults are conditioned to believe the adult rather than the child. Police, the courts, and social service agencies frequently are unable to provide the necessary protections or resources needed to ensure a child's safety. Religious institutions generally promote the sanctity of the family above all else, and many mental health professionals support efforts to keep the family together at any cost—both of which minimize protecting an individual child when measured against protecting the family as a unit.

Therefore, most children are faced with powerlessness when confronted with personal harm from a trusted adult. Such powerlessness in the face of repeated trauma over an extended period of time create global feelings of numbing, passivity, and impotence, represented by a general sense that one is helpless to exercise free choice or to pursue alternatives in most life situations. "People who feel helpless really believe that they have no influence over the success or failure of events that occur to them" (Walker 1970, 48).

Sexual Entitlement

This is the belief that sex is a privilege for the dominant person in any relationship and an obligation for the person who is nondominant. The dominant status of adult males in our society translates into the commonly held belief that men deserve to have their sexual desires met. Perceiving sex to be a privilege for the person(s) who exercises power and control creates an atmosphere in which sex really becomes perceived as an inherent right for whoever is dominant. Adult males are socialized to believe that it is their prerogative to have sex on demand, and for many adults, the privilege of power and control blurs the boundaries between adult and child. The multimillion-dollar industries of pornography and prostitution promote the norm of sex for sale and depict women (and frequently children) as objects to be used to satisfy sexual urges. In fact, the marketing of sex is so pervasive that it is estimated that upward of one million children may be involved in pornography and prostitution in the United States alone (Alexander 1987).

Shroud of Secrecy

This norm is the operational premise that sexual information is dangerous. Powerful elements of our culture perceive sex as dangerous and corrupting. Therefore, considerable energy is spent to maintain a shroud of secrecy over all aspects of sexuality. Global secrecy contributes to a pervasive society-wide anxiety about sexuality. We have strong social norms that discourage most people, but especially women and children, from discussing sexuality or from

seeking any kind of valid information. This atmosphere creates an environment of confusion, distortion, and fear.

Defining Patriarchy

These four dynamics are fundamental to the sexual abuse of children. To understand the complexities of child sexual abuse, it is necessary to identify and name the sources of these dynamics. No problem can be understood or resolved unless it is named. For too long, it has seemed dangerous to acknowledge that these basic dynamics underlying sexual abuse have their origin in the patriarchy.

Patriarchy has remained one of those shadowy and highly charged concepts that is seldom used because of its ability to unleash polarized emotions. Few books or articles define patriarchy or explain the concepts and dynamics of a patriarchal system.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1988) defines patriarchy as follows: "Social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line." This definition is superficial and restrictive. It suggests that patriarchy has been ended or will be ended by legal reforms that extend basic civil rights to women. In essence, however, such legal reforms merely reshape the nature of patriarchy. Although many civil rights have been achieved for women and children during the past century, patriarchy remains as strongly entrenched as ever in American society.

Gerda Lerner, in her book *The Creation of Patriarchy*, offers a more expansive framework in which to view patriarchy that helps to clarify why the larger social systems have resisted fundamental change in the face of reforms:

Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women [and children] in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women [and children] are deprived of access to such power. It does not imply that women [and children] are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources. (Lerner 1986, 239)

The very essence of patriarchy is "the assumption that men own and have the right to control the bodies, labor, and minds of women [and children]" (Bleier 1984, 164). Patriarchy prescribes that the basic organization of society is formulated by men. Evidence of this may be seen in the fact that those professions that warrant the highest status in terms of money and power remain largely the domain of males and that as women enter a profession, its status becomes lower. A fundamental premise of patriarchy is that men have the

power to dominate and control the laws, values, and behaviors of the society. Women and children are thereby relegated to a subordinate status in all aspects of the society.

It should be noted, however, that any person who fails to conform to the standards and norms set by those in power is relegated to a subordinate status. For example, men who are gay, Hispanic, or black or who in some other way fail to conform to the established norms are denied equal access to power and resources.

In workshops I have facilitated with a colleague, Judy Pohl, on the topic of the politics of sexual abuse, participants have been asked to brainstorm the values, beliefs, and norms that they generally associate with the word *patriarchy*. Some of these random responses become very poignant and potent when they are organized into the following conceptual groupings:

Powerful men are assumed to have ownership over women, children, and other men who are perceived to be weaker and less powerful. This becomes possible because of an exaggerated value of males and the devaluation of women and children. Men are assumed by birthright to have access to power and control.

Males are defined as being logical and rational; females and children are defined as being illogical and irrational; logic and rationality are defined as more powerful, therefore elevating males to superiority over females and children.

Male reality is assumed to be superior. Therefore, blind obedience to male reality is institutionalized in the legal and educational norms of society. Because male reality is unable to incorporate the concept of men as victims, no avenues are provided for males to express victimization experiences if they occur.

Physical strength and beauty are perceived to be greater than emotionality. Therefore, domination and machismo are given elevated value, and equality is replaced by assumptions that somebody must be in charge. Such a hierarchical form of social organization implies that somebody will be controlled by those who exercise their privilege of being in charge. This hierarchy creates a natural context for the emergence of classism and sets the stage for the internalized oppression of members of society who are defined as being of lower status. Institutionalized racism and homophobia further help to define the social order and limit access to power and control.

Religious verification is provided in support of the dominance of males. Biblical passages are used to define the natural order of the universe:

must be obedient to such power, the role of victim is glamorized. God is portrayed as a white male, and men are believed to be divinely invested with their role as spiritual leaders.

Money acquires a special value in a capitalist society, and the worth of an individual becomes measured by his or her ability to earn money. Such a value system makes it possible for money to become a vehicle for gaining power, and eventually money becomes equated with power.

Men inherently need and deserve sex. Because men are perceived to be powerless to control their sexual desires, it is the responsibility of women and children to set limits regarding the sexual advances of men. Women and children who fail to set such limits are labeled "seductive," whereas attempts to impose such limits on men defy and challenge male authority and the prevailing order.

Sex sells. Money and power allow access to sex. The social hierarchy of male control contributes to a vast network of pornography in which women and children are exploited for the pleasure and enjoyment of more dominant members of society. Because males are conditioned to idolize rough and forceful sex, pornography frequently links images of violence and submission with sex. Feminine or youthful victims are pursued and conquered, usually by men who are more powerful.

It is important to stress that male control is not merely theoretical. Examination of the holders of power and control in the important institutions that shape our society reveal the day-to-day reality of patriarchy. Most influential religious leaders (and all Catholic priests) are male. Historically, most physicians and psychiatrists have been male. Most judges are male. Most lawmaking bodies—state legislatures and the U.S. Congress—are male dominated. Most American political leaders, and all our presidents, have been male.

Although limited public attention to the problem of sexual abuse is relatively recent, there is actually a long history of social and legal sanctions that have permitted, and sometimes encouraged, the abuse of children. For example, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries B.C., vast expanses of territory were conquered and brought under the control of the Babylonian Empire. In approximately 1750 B.C., Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, compiled and amended all the existing laws of the diverse ethnic and cultural groupings that had been assimilated into the empire into a comprehensive code that established the parameters for appropriate and inappropriate, legal and illegal behaviors (Lerner 1986).

Because males controlled the pen, these laws primarily reflected the needs, concerns, and realities of men. The Code of Hammurabi is a significant development because it provided the first instrument whereby men legally codified

reality as their own, with the life experiences of women and children existing only in relationship to male reality. Institutions, rules, and regulations were created to guarantee the appropriation and proprietorship by men of a particular woman's sexuality and of her children (O'Brien 1981, 154). Through the use of laws, a hierarchy could be enforced: Men control women, and parents control children.

The codification of rules and regulations led to the creation of social and political institutions to enforce and promote the norms of the powerful. Men were the holders of power because of their access to knowledge and information. A study of historic and contemporary jurisprudence offers an interesting insight into the ramifications of the codification of power and control into laws that govern any given society. It is unclear exactly how many different laws were contained in the Hammurabic Code, but 73 of the 282 laws that have been discovered through archaeological searches deal with subjects related to marriage and sexual matters. These laws were generally more severely restrictive of females than of males. For example, under this ancient set of laws (Code 157), mother-son incest was punishable by death for both parties, while a father who raped his daughter was punished only by banishment from the city (Code 154) (Lerner 1986).

Early laws pertaining to sexual offenses demonstrated a definite bias in favor of men in positions of power and control. Most rape laws historically have incorporated principles that make it the responsibility of the victim to prove that she or he resisted the assault. According to Jewish law, a rapist was required to marry his victim, and divorce was not allowed in such situations (Deut. 22:28–29).

Historically, children have been victimized by mutilation practices, often involving sexual organs. The circumcision of males has been practiced as a religious rite throughout history and remains one of the most common surgical procedures today, despite its questionable value. Castration traditionally has been an acceptable practice, with the eunuch playing an important role in certain societies. Until relatively recently, the Chinese practiced the ancient tradition of binding the foot of girls. Within classical Roman society, the *Patria Postestas* allowed a father the privilege to sell, present for sacrifice, murder, or otherwise dispose of his child (Radbill 1974). The Roman Law of the Twelve Tables, which modified the *Patria Postestas*, forbade bringing up deformed children and imposed the restriction that a father could sell a son only three times.

By the sixteenth century, many of the legal sanctions against rape and incest in England had eroded considerably, as the legal age of consent for females had been lowered to six years old (Robbins 1959). In Victorian England, the age of consent for females was twelve years old, although a child younger than eight years old was denied the opportunity to give evidence against a man who had sexual contact with her, as the law stated that she

sively on females as the victims. The absence of laws that recognize the need to protect male children at any age is indicative of the historical belief that males should be immune from the necessity of such safeguards.

In this country, the courts in Massachusetts adopted the Mosaic Law in 1646, imposing a penalty of death on unruly children; Connecticut passed a similar law in 1651 (Radbill 1974). Current laws in most U.S. states continue to reflect the biases of patriarchal norms. Activist lawyer Catherine MacKinnon advocates that the state is based on male reality and the "law sees and treats women [and children] the way men see and treat women [and children]" (MacKinnon 1983, 644). Consequently, the laws to protect children from physical and sexual victimization are generally vague and frequently inadequate or antiquated. Current legal channels severely limit the availability of women and children to challenge male violations of their sexuality, and it is exceedingly difficult for a male to find any legal avenue to initiate a challenge if he is sexually violated. Although there are a few exceptions, most jurisdictions enforce the prevailing norms of a male reality.

The criminal code of the State of Georgia offers one example of how little reform actually has been achieved. Under present-day Georgia law, only a female can be raped (chapter 26-2001); only a female can be seduced (chapter 26-2005); incest is limited to sexual intercourse (chapter 26-2006); statutory rape is restricted to sexual intercourse with a female under the age of fourteen years old (chapter 26-2018); and child molestation is legally a concern only when the child is less than fourteen years of age (chapter 26-2019).

In addition to being antiquated, these statutes create a legal collage rife with inconsistencies and contradictions. For example, under these Georgia statutes, an adult male could be prosecuted for taking pornographic photos of a fifteen-year-old girl but not for engaging in "consensual" sexual intercourse with that same child if she were not a biological or steprelative. Similarly, an adult female could be prosecuted under the criminal code of Georgia for fondling a thirteen-year-old boy but not for engaging in "consensual" sexual intercourse with a fifteen-year-old if he were not related by birth or marriage.

A review of the laws and policies in most jurisdictions will make clear that historically we have been much more concerned with protecting the rights of the alleged sexual offender than with ensuring the safety of the victim and more concerned with defending the integrity of the family as an institution than with promoting the safety and security of our children. Evidence of this tendency can be seen in the fact that laws protecting adults from false allegations and ensuring that the constitutional freedoms of the alleged offender are not restricted are much more clearly defined than are laws protecting child victims. Feminist writer Evan Stark argues that contemporary laws and the

laws generally seem to "function today as a reconstituted or extended patriarchy, defending the family form 'by any means necessary'" (Stark, Flitcraft, and Frazier 1979, 464), including overlooking violence against children within a family system.

Many men participate in the patriarchy by aspiring to modern-day images of masculinity and manhood, most of which revere male power and control. All too often masculinity is linked with sexualized images of power and control. Kate Millett, one of the early leaders of the feminist movement, insightfully notes that "patriarchal societies typically link feelings of cruelty with sexuality, the latter often equated both with evil and with power" (Millett 1969, 44).

These linkages are reflected in the images that are portrayed in our contemporary media:

Witness our valorization of Rambo reflexes (passionate violence marshaled in the face of personal injustice); Schwarzenegger sentiments (technically precise violence with merciless execution); the Eastwood ethic (Dirty Harry's cool violence in the name of the state as antihero); Bronson brutality (vigilante violence directed against 'social refuse,' usually young black and Latino men); and Norris nuances (stylized violence with strong xenophobia). (Dyson 1989, 55)

Such media portrayals of men and women shape our imagery of gender, with male heroes consistently depicted as big, independent, powerful, having sexual prowess, and being smarter than and more important than other characters. Women and children are generally cast as being small, dependent, powerless, sexually ignorant or inexperienced, and less intelligent and less important than their male counterparts.

"The very existence of rape [and child sexual abuse] and its commonness, the ready availability of aggressive pornography, the constant portrayal in books, films, and television of men *taking* women [or children] cannot help but create a consciousness that links manhood and virility with mastery, appropriation, and force" (Bleier 1984, 185). Many women, and those men who do not inherently subscribe to the values of machismo, believe that the only way they can acquire power is to endorse the values and behaviors of patriarchy. However, many of these same women and peripheralized men find that participation in the patriarchy leads to further victimization because entry into the inner sanctums of the male world requires them to deny or abandon their inherent femininity (which is viewed as inferior) and to incorporate into their identity images of masculinity (which are viewed as superior).

Prevailing research indicates that as many as 30 percent of all children

may be affected by sexual abuse (Bagley et al. 1984; Landis 1956). The collective silence and apathy of most men concerning the issues of rape and child sexual abuse is deafening. Although a large number of men in our society are fathers, most men are generally apathetic about child sexual abuse. This topic is rarely of either academic or active concern to any modern-day American male, except those few men whose careers bring them face to face with the issue. Even then, male will exert considerable energy to avoid dealing with this issue.

Even fewer men have focused any attention on understanding patriarchy. Consequently, it is difficult to find information on its development. Anyone who attempts to conduct research on this subject will quickly discover that patriarchy is seldom referenced in the indexes of books and articles written by men.

A long tradition of interpreting patriarchy as being ahistorical and invisible has contributed to a general acceptance of patriarchy as the natural order of human social organization. Much of the information we have about the historical development of human civilization suggests that patriarchal dynamics have been a part of all social and political relationships. Throughout most of recorded history, however, historians and anthropologists have been predominantly males. Therefore, much of our knowledge of history may be limited to and biased in favor of male interpretations of events and trends. Males have tended to portray men's reality as truth and fact. Historically, the voices of minorities and of the disenfranchised have been suppressed so they could not inform others of their experiences and accomplishments. Typically, the accomplishments and experiences of women, children, and minority populations have been ignored or filtered through the biases of men who have had a vested interest in promoting or protecting the status quo.

A growing body of literature produced by women and minority authors challenges the existing knowledge and presents alternative perspectives of history. Much of this literature presents extensive historical research findings that refute many of our beliefs about the inherent superiority of white males (see, for example, Bleier 1984; Figs 1970; Lerner 1986; Walker 1983).

Much insight can be gained by examining feminist interpretations of the etiology by which men acquired a consolidation of power regarding the tools for communication. The invention of an organized system of writing that incorporated grammatical elements occurred shortly after 3000 B.C. in Sumer. Written language served an important function: It provided the first opportunity to record history. Recording, interpreting, and reinterpreting historical events provided a vehicle by which humans could survive death and create a sense of continuity from generation to generation. Those who had access to the knowledge and skills of writing were invested with the responsibilities and duties of history making. "By the time of Hammarubi's empire

education and therefore the knowledge that became inseparable from independence or power" (Bleier 1984, 154).

Ultimately, knowledge and information become crucial sources of power. Because women, children, and minorities traditionally have been excluded from this exchange of information and knowledge, they have long been denied access to power and control, which has reinforced their position of inferiority and subordination. "If knowledge is power, power is also knowledge, and a large factor in their subordinate position is the fairly systematic ignorance patriarchy imposes upon women [and children and minorities]" (Millett 1969, 42). The tendency to overlook distinct events or periods in history has contributed to the more generalized social perception that male dominance is inherent in and eternal to the human condition.

By dissecting the monolithic concept of patriarchy and identifying the distinct and essential underlying features, it becomes more apparent that our current social order is truly the product of human creation rather than the result of any predetermined destiny. Contemporary feminist writers have begun to uncover a vast body of historical information that documents the evolution of patriarchy and thereby challenges contemporary perceptions of the natural order of human civilization. To understand patriarchy and its significance in creating the sociopolitical context for child sexual abuse, it is important to examine the component features of patriarchy.

The Essential Features of Patriarchy

Five essential features, woven together, create the tapestry of patriarchy: patrilineal descent, paternalism, male hegemony, heterosexism, and misogyny. Each of these features provides a fundamental underpinning for the clinical dynamics that create a context for the sexual abuse of children (chattel property, learned helplessness, sexual entitlement, and shroud of secrecy). It is useful to examine these five features to elaborate their historical origins and their current impact on the problem of child sexual abuse.

No single historical event provides a landmark to identify a beginning for any of these features of patriarchy. Rather, the specific origins of patriarchy are vague, in part because the underlying dynamics of patriarchal societies were already strongly entrenched by the beginning of recorded history. There do, however, seem to be specific trends or periods in history that illuminate these dynamics and that provide insight into the ways in which these dynamics have been consolidated into an increasingly prevalent, complex, and powerful force.

This dynamic can be defined as male dominance in property and property laws that guarantee the inheritance rights of sons. Judith Antonelli proposes that "patriarchy is based on the 'phallacy' that the male is creator. Man's original awe and envy of woman becomes, under patriarchy, resentment and hostility. The only way man can possess female power is through woman, and so he colonizes her, suppressing her sexuality so that it serves him rather than being the source of her power. . . . Patriarchy is indeed a male neurosis" (Antonelli 1982, 401). The "male neurosis" of patriarchy that contributes to the colonization of women is the same dynamic that leads to the domination of children through physical and sexual abuse. The fact that all children are ultimately the joint creation of a male and a female is routinely ignored by patriarchal norms and laws that grant priority to patrilineage and that promote the concept that a child is merely an extension of his or her parents rather than a human being in his or her own right.

But how did such a preoccupation with male lineage emerge? To clarify this question, it is necessary to look far back into history, to the beginning of civilization. Most historians agree that human beings initially congregated in small nomadic tribes, foraging over vast expanses of land. Most of a person's waking energy was focused on survival. There are no written records from this period of history, so attempts to define the nature of social interactions can be only speculative.

It is generally agreed, however, that survival probably required considerable cooperation and equality between all members of a tribe. It is also generally agreed that the process of human reproduction was quite mysterious to men and women. As Neumann (1959) notes, "the connection between sexuality and childbearing was . . . unknown" to primitive people (p. 11). Therefore, we have the roots of females as goddesses and overseers of humanity. In the earliest periods of history, it also appears that women were perceived to have magical powers because of the general lack of knowledge regarding the birth process.

In these ancient times, neither men nor women seemed to realize that they had an active role in helping to create life. Because children emerged from the physical bodies of women, females were generally held in high esteem, and the earliest civilization created mother-goddesses as the heavenly deities to be worshiped. Women seemed to have an exclusive role in the magical process of childbirth. There is general agreement among most archeologists and historians that people in prehistoric times had no knowledge of the man's part in the reproductive process (Stone 1976).

Archeological evidence suggests that people gradually began to shift from a nomadic life-style to sedentary settlements approximately twelve thousand years ago (Bleier 1984). Excavations of the earliest villages that were settled

sions and rank among women, men, and children (Bleier 1984). As people began to settle in one spot for periods of time, people were able to domesticate animals. It was through this event that people gained their first insights regarding the mysteries of human reproduction. There was, for the first time, a realization that the male had a specific role in the reproductive process. This knowledge radically transformed gender roles and provided a fundamental building block for the concept of male dominance.

Elizabeth Fisher ingeniously argued that the domestication of animals taught men their role in procreation and that the practice of the forced mating of animals led men to the idea of [rape]. . . . More recently, Mary O'Brien built an elaborate explanation of the origin of male dominance on men's psychological need to compensate for their inability to bear children through the construction of institutions of dominance and, like Fisher, dated this 'discovery' in the period of the discovery of animal domestication. (Lerner 1986, 46)

Insights about the male role in procreation provided an important cornerstone for the concept of patrilineage. With the heightened attention to patrilineage, the status of men increased and the importance of women and girls decreased. For example, archaeological excavations from a variety of cultures and historical periods reveal a pattern of increasing wealth and social differentiation and a decline in the status of women and children (Lerner 1986).

Soon women were perceived in less magical ways. Men began to usurp the femininity power of giving birth by relegating the female to the role of being a receptacle or vessel into which the male sperm was planted—a subordinate and subservient status. During this period of evolving agrarian societies, it became critical to have a stable and ample supply of human labor. Women's reproductive capacity and the labor potential of children soon were recognized as crucial tribal resources that could be controlled by the powerful members of the tribe.

Men, who were not restricted by pregnancy and childbirth, emerged as the holders of power and the managers of tribal resources. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss advocates that the exchange of women and children was the first form of trade (Levi-Strauss 1969). By transforming women and children into commodities, they could be perceived and used more as objects than as human beings. The possession of women and children increasingly gave men access to power. As men became more experienced in managing the resources of the tribe, they discovered ways to consolidate their power and control in order to promote their dominance over those members of the tribe who were less powerful.

Powerful men soon discovered the symbolic power of sexual control. The

creating classes of psychologically enslaved people. Even in modern-day society, sexual assault or the threat of sexual assault is frequently used as a vehicle to control those who are perceived to be less powerful. Women learn to restrict their freedom of movement at a young age because of the potential for sexual assault. Legal incarceration had generally included the reality that sexual assault is an inevitable risk within prison culture, which sometimes serves as an effective deterrent to would-be criminals. And rape historically has been accepted to be within the rules of war, with such behavior left unpunished during war and even considered to be a privilege of conquering soldiers.

As men in ancient tribal societies became more expert in their methods of controlling those who could be conquered, warfare became more commonplace. There was a great incentive to increase power by expanding the pool of available human resources, so men became bolder about raiding other tribes and settlements to steal and capture women and children. "Small self-sufficient tribes had to relate to neighboring tribes either in constant warfare or find a way toward peaceful co-existence. Taboos on endogamy and incest structured peaceful interaction and led to alliances among tribes" (Lerner 1986, 24). Within this framework, the implementation of an incest taboo became fundamentally important for social organization (Levi-Strauss 1969).

As male power and control became increasingly linked to acquisition and control of women and children, more emphasis was placed on defining and structuring human interactions. The monogamous, or nuclear, family gained importance as a social unit and provided a greater opportunity to ensure patrilineal descent.

Paternalism

In a paternalistic society, the male, as head of any defined social unit, has power and ownership over all members of that unit. Many laws have been enacted throughout history to enforce the sanctity of a man's rule over his "castle":

It is said that the first law of marriage was proclaimed by Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome (753 B.C.). . . . "This law obligated the married women . . . to conform themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands and the husbands to rule their wives as necessary and inseparable possessions." . . . It was the legal right of a husband to require that his wife obey him. She was his property and subject to whatever form of control was necessary for achieving obedience. . . . Roman husbands had the legal right to chastice, divorce, or kill their wives. (Dobash and Dobash 1979, 35-37)

as a civil contract that protected the private property and inheritance. Many contemporary feminists have compared marriage to feudalism, as exemplified by the injunctions included in most wedding ceremonies (Millett 1969).

Classical Greek society provided the impetus for organizing autonomous family units into a larger and more cohesive social network. Aristotelian philosophy provided the substance for the creation of a vast social order in which patriarchal values were institutionalized to create the fabric for a social state. The constructs of the state as a form of social organization reflect a hierarchical and dichotomized worldview. In essence, the state was defined and controlled by men's reality and conveniently institutionalized dominance and control over women and children.

With the evolution of the concept of the state, the monogamous family was transformed into the paternalistic family, in which the wife and children became servants of the male as head of the household. An essential dynamic of paternalistic relationships is an acceptance that the master can keep the slave(s) in ignorance of past and future alternatives. Paternalism discourages any sense of collective consciousness or collective behavior. This, in turn, diminishes the potential for an individual to understand systems in political terms.

Within such a framework, justice is both defined and enforced by the paternalistic figure. According to Aristotle, "The association of a father with his sons has the form of monarchy. . . . The ideal kingship is paternal rule. . . . The association of husband and wife is clearly an aristocracy. The man rules by virtue of merit, and . . . in conformity with his own superiority" (Thomson 1977). Furthermore, Aristotle advocates that "the wife . . . will be 'silent' before her husband, no less than the children before their father" (Newman 1973).

Greek society, as exemplified by Aristotelian philosophy, actually provides the structural framework for a social order that can ignore the exploitation of those who are considered to be of a lesser status. All too frequently throughout history, such exploitation has been achieved through sexual control of those members of society who are perceived to be inferior or weaker. This control was particularly true in Greek society: "The state represent[ed] . . . the most complete codification and institutionalization of patriarchal authority. . . . The state has continued to be . . . the means through which men have controlled . . . sexuality. Laws control access to . . . sexuality through their regulation of the degree to which rape, battering, incest and child abuse, abortion, pornography, contraception, and divorce are permitted" (Bleier 1984, 158-159).

Double standards in sexuality provide an avenue to strengthen patriarchal control. For example, in Greek society, "premarital and marital chastity were

strictly enforced on women, but their husbands were free to enjoy sexual gratification from lower class women, *heterae*, and slaves and from young men" (Lerner 1986, 202).

Aristotelian philosophy even provided the underpinning for class dominance, as the rule of some men over other men could be justified merely by ascribing to those men some of the same qualities ascribed to women. Even today, men who are perceived to be weak or passive—that is, peripheralized males—are ascribed a strong value of inferiority and subordination. This value can easily be seen in portrayals of minority males (blacks, Hispanics, gays, and so on) as being less competent and trustworthy in positions of power.

Rational thought, usually expressed in concepts of justice and injustice, became vehicles to explain away certain aspects of the human condition. Greek society was instrumental in establishing the norm that men can think freely but must remain cautious about feelings. Western culture, emerging from the constructs of classical Greece, grants permission to men to feel powerful and angry and encourages them to perceive rationality as a feeling state. But men are discouraged from accepting responsibility, from feeling compassion, and from striving to achieve a community that is grounded in equality. The process of male socialization in our culture is a testament to the consequences of this constricted approach to the human condition.

The paternalistic values of ancient Greece have provided an important cornerstone for Western culture as it has developed through the centuries. Emerging from the advancements of the Industrial Revolution were a number of significant contributions to this ongoing development, including the strengthening of paternalistic norms.

Especially important was the concept of the male as the ultimate ruler of the family unit, which was further consolidated in the Industrial Revolution. The reorganization of society that emerged from the Industrial Revolution largely reflected male values and constructs. A division of labor in which people were assigned distinctly separate and rigidly defined roles according to functional tasks became an underpinning of most productive enterprises. Because men controlled the avenues for decision making within most industrial enterprises, they determined how any particular division of labor would occur. Therefore, the workplace became defined as a male domain.

The paternalistic family became an essential ingredient in the effective functioning of an industrialized society. Within this context, the family became essentially an economic unit. Interactions between the male head of the household and his wife and children occurred only during the nonproductive times away from the workplace. "The family was promoted as a private 'haven' to compensate for the public 'heartlessness' of the factories. A man's home had to appear to be his castle and he had to feel his new privilege of

workplace" (Goodrich et al. 1988, 3).

To function effectively, the paternalistic family required a division of roles among family members, defined hierarchically and maintained by the male head of the household through direct and coercive forms of authority that were granted by social, legal, and religious institutions. By defining the male as the source of control in the family unit, the ruler of his kingdom, the husband/father was elevated to a godlike status within the boundaries of the family unit. Consequently, women and children were defined as subordinate, with men as the locus of control over all events and interactions among family members.

As a general rule, the sanctity of the paternalistic family extended beyond the boundaries of the physical household. As in earlier periods of history, men continued to control the labor potentials of women and children. For example, children were widely employed in factories during the early periods of industrialization, with children as young as five years of age being required to work up to sixteen hours at a time, sometimes being prevented from leaving the factory by the use of irons riveted around their ankles. It was not until 1802 that the first child labor laws were implemented, and even these laws did not apply to children who were under the supervision of their parents.

Discipline is another important locus of control within the constructs of paternalism. For example, the rule of thumb became a part of English jurisprudence during the eighteenth century. This rule allowed a husband to beat his wife with a rod or whip as long as it was no thicker than his thumb. Although the application of this concept was focused on marital relations, it could easily be applied to paternalistic controls over children.

When necessary, violence has been sanctioned as a means of discipline.

Social scientists have primarily conceptualized violence as a breakdown in social order in which either individuals or social structures are thought to be deviant or aberrant. [It may be more accurate] to see violence used by men against women [and children] in the family as attempts to establish or maintain a patriarchal social order. Violence is used by men to chastise their wives [and children] for real or perceived transgressions of his authority and as attempts to reaffirm and maintain a hierarchical and moral order within the family. (Dobash and Dobash 1977, 17)

Sexual segregation is an extremely pervasive approach used to support paternalism. Men are routinely granted positions of leadership and control within important institutions, with women and children provided more limited access to participation through auxiliary functions. Men have even defined which issues are primary and which are auxiliary in nature. For exam-

ple, cultural norms support the home and family as a private sphere of human activity. Therefore, there are strong prohibitions against infringing on male authority within the privacy of the family, even when such authority involves the use of violence or sexual assault. But public intrusion into the home is allowed and encouraged in the form of government control of birth control, abortion, marriage, and homosexuality. Of course, the institution of government is male controlled, and laws that control the sexual behaviors of family members (such as abortion and birth control laws) are promoted as pro-family. Efforts to pass laws that restrict paternalism (such as more severe penalties for battering or child abuse) are opposed because male lawmakers perceive these restrictions as a threat to the sanctity of the family unit. The unspoken reality is that such changes threaten many fundamental aspects of male privilege.

This dichotomy has been an important factor in perpetuating the abuse of power that so often accompanies paternalism. Because of the institutionalized barriers that prevent women and children from talking about their home as anything other than a sanctuary, they have remained silent about their physical and sexual abuse (Yllo and Bograd 1988). "For the maintenance of paternalism (and slavery) it is essential to convince subordinates that their protector is the only authority capable of fulfilling their needs. It is therefore in the interest of the master to keep the slave in ignorance of his [or her] past and future alternatives" (Lerner 1986, 241).

Male Hegemony

This is the belief that men hold the fundamental power in all the important institutions in society—military, political, and religious—and women and children are deprived access to such power. Religion is the clearest example of male hegemony. Religious constructs generally reflect collective visions of the world as people perceive and wish it to be. They also reflect the attitudes and values by which human relationships are formed. Institutionalized Christianity provides one of the most interesting and comprehensive illustrations of a worldview that has at its core the concept of male hegemony.

By the time Christianity emerged as a distinct and organized theology, religion in general had already become a male domain designed to exclude women by the existence of all-male priesthoods. Images of mother-goddesses that were so prevalent during early civilization had, by the time of classical Greece, largely been replaced by male gods. Christianity took a bold leap and declared God the Father, a single male entity, to be in charge of the human condition. The creation story in the Book of Genesis provided the basis for the final shift from mother-goddesses as the holders of universal fertility to a single all-powerful male God who incorporated all the concepts of creation and generativity.

potential for mere mortals to challenge this image of absolute male control. Christian doctrines enhanced the image of its male deity by conceptualizing him as a trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Who could date to challenge such a pervasive image of power and control?

Institutionalized Christianity has reinforced the prevailing source of power and control within patriarchal societies. A fundamental concept in Christian teachings is obedience and acceptance of one's position within social and political hierarchies. For example, religious teachings have advised parents, "He who spares the rod, hates his son; But he who loves him, disciplines him diligently" (Prov. 13:24). The laws set forth by the Ten Commandments require that all children honor and respect both their mother and their father (Exod. 20:12).

While promoting the concept of blind obedience and compliant acceptance of one's status within a hierarchy, the Christian Church has actively promoted the belief that women and children are inferior. Countless examples in the Bible support Judeo-Christian claims that women and children are less than, and therefore interior to, men. For example, through the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Church established the official position that the mother is only soil in which the father's seed grows (Tuchman 1978). The teachings of St. Augustine further defined women as slaves to their husbands, granting husbands the right to beat and abuse their wives: "It is the duty of servants to obey their masters . . . [and wives] have made a contract of servitude" (Hartley 1913, 231).

Children were relegated to an equally low status. The *Apostolic Constitutions* [officially, the *Ordinances of the Holy Apostles through Clement*, a set of ecclesiastical laws laid down by the apostles (Walker 1983)] prescribed severe physical punishment for children. Ignoring the role of mothers in the parenting process, fathers were instructed, "Do not hesitate to reprove them, chastening them with severity. . . . Teach your children the word of the Lord, straiten them even with stripes and render them submissive, teaching them from infancy the Holy Scriptures" (Laistner 1951, 31).

Christianity also had a dramatic impact on the prevailing attitudes regarding almost every aspect of sexuality. The changes in the norms concerning rape offer a dramatic example of the impact of Christianity. In the ancient world, rape was clearly defined as unjust. In Roman and Saxon societies, rapists were punished by death. The punishment for a rapist in Norman society was to cut off his testicles and gouge out his eyes. And the Byzantine code prescribed death for a rapist and required that the victim be given all the rapist's property, even if she was only a slave (Pearsall 1969; Soisson and Soisson 1977).

Christian doctrines were much more ambivalent and sometimes even contradictory. Church decrees transformed sex and sexuality into an abomina-

of God was calculated on allowing the human race to continue. Sexual celibacy (Lederer 1968). St Augustine taught that sexual intercourse was never without sin, even between husband and wife (Russell 1972), but under Church law, it was illegal for any wife to refuse sexual intercourse with her husband. The only exception was the Church's prohibition against marital sex on holy days (Walker 1983).

Christianity has become an important factor in sexual abuse because of its strong often contradictory messages concerning sexuality. Whereas most Christian teachings reflect the underlying norm that sex is to be repressed, many other Christian edicts actually encourage marital rape. For example, in the early years after its formation, the Catholic Church enforced laws that a wife could not accuse her husband of rape, even if he used force with accompanying brutality (Bayer 1985).

The concept of male hegemony that is incorporated into the image of a single, all-powerful male God provided the justification to unleash incredible fury on anyone who failed to conform or who challenged the authority of Christian beliefs. Early efforts in the treatment of emotional problems, which were often perceived as nonconformity, were strongly influenced by religious beliefs and often sanctioned beatings to drive out the devil.

By advocating that the laws of God supersede the laws of humans, Christian thought also has provided an escape route when men have found the prevailing social order too constricting. Fundamental Christianity's obsession with salvation and the afterlife frequently diverts the valuable energies of active believers from the important tasks at hand here on earth, such as accepting our moral responsibility to provide for the nurturance and safety of all human beings, including those who are less powerful and privileged, such as children. Frequently, divine absolution is invoked to forgive a sexual offender of violating his or her earthly responsibilities. In this framework of religious values, a norm of compliant believing is more highly valued than an ethic of human responsibility.

Heterosexism

Heterosexism is the belief in the supremacy of heterosexuality in all social and sexual relationships, as well as the institutionalization of heterosexuality in all aspects of society to support this belief, including the use of legal, social, and religious sanctions to maintain homophobia. Heterosexism emerges as a hybrid from an overlapping of the dynamics of paternalism and male hegemony. Sexuality, especially the heterosexual structuring of consciousness and institutions, is a significant factor in the patriarchal organization that facilitates the oppression of women and children, as well as any men who deviate from the established norms and values.

sexual activity that is not undertaken with the intent of procreation (Curran 1988).

The cultural norm of homophobia has been a common method of controlling sexuality within patriarchal societies. Homophobia is any system of beliefs that supports and promotes fear, hatred, and negative stereotypes against a person who displays affection toward another person of the same sex.

An important component of this norm is the phenomenon that homophobic individuals often exhibit an actual physiological response of fear when confronted with physical closeness or emotional intimacy in a same-sex interaction (Aguero, Bloch, and Byrne 1985). But homophobia goes beyond just the emotion of fear. Within the realities of daily living, homophobia involves the active demonstration of overt hatred and bigotry. Not only do the dominant institutions within a patriarchal society invest considerable energy and resources in cultivating homophobic fear, but those same institutions tacitly condone homophobic prejudice and discrimination.

Such fear has not been predominant throughout history. For example, Plato, in his *Symposium*, specifically equates democracy with an acceptance of homosexuality: "Wherever . . . it has been established that it is shameful to be involved in homosexual relationships . . . , this is due to evil on the part of the legislators, to despotism on the part of the rulers, and to cowardice on the part of the governed" (Boswell 1980, 51).

Plato's acceptance of a broad range of human sexuality was effectively eradicated during subsequent centuries. The influence of Christian theology has been especially significant in promoting heterosexism. Much of this theology is based on the belief that sexual behaviors that do not involve procreation are unnatural. Within this belief system, homosexuality is especially suspect, and such behavior has been criticized most forcefully as a crime against nature. The assumption that heterosexuality is the biological norm for all sexual behavior and that homosexuality is an abnormality contradicts biological data, however. Research clearly indicates that most species of animal engage in physical and sexual behaviors with same-sex partners.

Nonetheless, Christianity has been rigidly intolerant of homosexuality. In spite of strong assertions by Church leaders that opposition to this aspect of sexuality is required by divine decrees, it seems just as likely that such heterosexist beliefs are really politically inspired. Several contradictions within Christian theology offer support of this contention. Historian John Boswell notes one such contradiction:

The very same [Christian Scriptures] which are thought to condemn homosexual acts condemn hypocrisy in the most strident terms, and on

greater authority: and yet Western society did not create any social taboos against hypocrisy, did not claim that hypocrites were "unnatural," did not segregate them into an oppressed minority, did not enact laws punishing their sin with castration or death. No Christian state, in fact, has passed laws against hypocrisy per se, despite its continual and explicit condemnation by Jesus and the church. (Boswell 1980, 7)

Whereas Jesus made no specific statement condemning homosexuality, subsequent church policies and institutional norms have become deeply entrenched homophobia.

Ultimately, homophobia is an important tool for sexual control within a patriarchal system. This concept has traditionally been used as a weapon to facilitate social and political conformity. Throughout history, individuals who have been outspoken in challenging the norms of the status quo, who have failed to conform to the prevailing social order, or who have been especially bold in expressing creative visions have been vulnerable to being labeled "homosexual," with such a label then frequently providing a vehicle for repression. The practice of burning witches at the stake was common during many periods of history. Although there were usually many reasons why a person might be accused of being a witch, suspicion of being a homosexual was one of them. Such execution by burning is but one example of the severe consequences that historically have accompanied the label of homosexuality.

For patriarchal individuals and institutions that seek to maintain order and control, such an opportunity to label, segregate, and control becomes a crucial demonstration of authority. The message is clear that anyone who might choose to deviate from the norms of the prevailing order faces the threat of being assigned a negative label, with potentially devastating consequences.

Historically, sexuality has been a major focus for exercising such authority. Within patriarchal societies, the prescribed norms of masculine and feminine roles severely limit the potential for human intimacy. For example, male intimacy may occur within narrow boundaries, and any behavior between males that fails to adhere to the designated ground rules raises suspicions of homosexuality. "It is a tragic irony in our culture that men can only come comfortably close to each other when they are sharing a common target. As teenagers they come together in a gang or as members of a team out to 'destroy' the other team. As adults, in wartime, they have a common enemy" (Goldberg 1976, 132).

Within the constructs of patriarchy, maintaining such a narrow range of acceptable behavior regarding sexuality and intimacy becomes an important source of power and control. Alternative ways of behaving are extremely threatening because freedom of choice decreases the opportunities for control. Those who rigidly control are perhaps the most fearful of being controlled themselves. "In a patriarchal society male dominance must be maintained at all costs because the person who dominates cannot conceive of any alterna-

the missionary position as the only acceptable method to be used in sexual interactions between a man and a woman, and that position is a clear demonstration of male dominance.

A significant outgrowth of heterosexism is the linkage of power and control with sexuality. In other words, heterosexism provides a foundation for the eroticism of power and control. It promotes sexuality based on the values of dominance and submission, encouraging suspicion when it is based on mutual respect. Rape and child sexual abuse are examples of the abuse of power that becomes possible because of such an elevated sense of male entitlement regarding sexuality.

People frequently use their position of power to sexually exploit those who are less powerful. Unfortunately, there are countless examples of adults—parents, relatives, teachers, clergy, physicians, therapists, and so on—who use their role to sexually abuse another person who is entrusted to their care:

A nationwide survey of psychiatrists, reported in May 1986, found that 6.4% of respondents acknowledged sexual contact with their patients. Three national surveys of psychologists reported a range of explicit sexual contact between male therapists and patients from 9.4% to 12.1% (2 to 3 percent of female therapists had been sexually intimate with their patients.) Social workers reported a smaller prevalence rate. (Pope and Bouhoutsos 1986, v)

Pope and Bouhoutsos report that although only 7 percent of psychotherapists acknowledged that they engaged in sexual intimacies with clients, 18 percent said that they considered engaging in such behavior. Later in their book, they report that a high percentage of those clients who were sexually abused by therapists were victims of childhood sexual molestation, therefore having already been at risk for such abuse of power. This examination of the behavior of therapists provides an alarming insight into the prevalence with which such eroticized power leads to the abuse of a client.

Misogyny

Misogyny is male hatred of women. In other words, male nature is held to be expressive of all humanity, while female nature is held to be different from and of less value than male human nature. The field of medicine, and particularly the specialty of psychiatry, provides many fascinating and instructive insights regarding the power of misogyny. It is interesting that while the overall impact of child physical and sexual abuse, battering, and rape on health

sionals and medical institutions to these problems has been limited and fragmented.

Although women are the primary consumers of psychiatric services, men's interpretation of reality defines the nature of those services. To understand the prevalence of the male perspective, one must go back to the beginning, to Sigmund Freud. Freudian theory is based in large part on the dynamics of human sexuality.

Freud believed that children were not sexual until puberty. Therefore, as he listened to reports from his female clients about their memories of sexual incidents during their childhood, he postulated that such reports could only be the result of sexual abuse by an older adult. In his famous paper "The Aetiology of Hysteria," which he delivered to the Society for Psychiatry and Neurology in 1896, Freud stated, "I . . . put forward the thesis that at the bottom of every case of hysteria there are *one or more occurrences of premature sexual experiences*" (Masson 1984, 263). He was not, however, prepared for the negative reception of his seduction theory by the male-dominated psychiatric community.

The seduction theory was viewed as a statement of nonconformity, challenging the basic tenets of psychiatry. Freud was still young at this time, and although he was already very popular, he apparently felt that he needed acceptance to ensure his continued success. Therefore, he gave in to the political pressure from his professional peers and modified his theory. He altered his conclusions and advocated instead that sexual abuse existed only in the realm of fantasy. In other words, sexual abuse was relegated to the status of being merely hysterical fantasies of neurotic females.

There is no evidence that Freud altered his theory based on new or contradictory data from his treatment of patients. However, because Freud often relied on scientific theory, his change was widely interpreted as the result of scientific study, and his modified approach was accepted as fact.

For those who might argue that Freud was merely an innocent victim of his time, it is important to note that one of his contemporaries, John Stuart Mill, was an outspoken advocate of respecting the true integrity of females. Despite intense opposition and political pressure, Mill remained true to his conscience (Bell 1983). This clearly demonstrates that Freud did have choices other than conforming to the prevailing norms of the powerful medical establishment. Unfortunately, the ramifications of Freud's failure of conscience and courage are still painfully felt today.

Freudian analysis, and the psychiatric profession in general, has been a model of misogyny. Freud's concept of the normal human being was an adult male; females were thereby defined as being deviant human beings because they lacked a penis, and even male children were defined as inferior because their power was yet undeveloped. In both cases, the entire psyche was determined to be centered on the struggle to compensate for this deficiency.

Within the framework of psychiatry, attempts to understand and feelings that do not conform to a male-biased reality are conveniently diagnosed as distorted thinking and categorized as dysfunctional or neurotic behavior. We are all too familiar with the frequency with which incest survivors have been diagnosed as hysterical or chronically depressed and treated with medication rather than being encouraged to talk about their life experiences. Psychiatry has provided a powerful set of constructs that are a first-line defense against changes in patriarchal systems. It is important to realize that Freud actually acted as an agent of control for patriarchal standards and to understand the entrenchment of our prevailing social norms and the extent to which the status quo is able to resist change.

In many respects, the psychiatric community has used the concept of misogyny in much the same way as an incest family. Victims who disclose their history of sexual abuse are not believed and/or are punished. Over the years, much professional energy has been devoted to protecting the secret that sexual abuse is a reality. Most members of the psychiatric community who have been confronted by firsthand reports of sexual abuse have conveniently chosen to ignore this issue or to minimize its significance. The constructs of psychiatry have provided a variety of mechanisms to define the experiences of victims of sexual abuse as abnormal and dysfunctional and the behaviors of offenders as expected and justifiable. It is only recently that the true nature of Freud's original thinking has reemerged into the public awareness (Masson 1984). Yet even in the 1980s, psychiatrists who believed client reports of childhood sexual abuse continued to be viewed with suspicion and were judged to be dangerous, defiant, and nonconforming members of the psychiatric community.

Freudian theory has been a strong influence in the training of mental health practitioners. Mental health treatment resources often reflect the underlying values and premises of psychoanalytic theory. It has been very difficult for psychoanalysts to treat sexual abuse effectively because there has been no easy way to categorize victims within a disease-oriented framework and much difficulty in prescribing a cure for such victimization. To respond to sexual victimization in a manageable way, the psychiatric community has conveniently reorganized the problem to focus on the symptoms of sexual victimization as reflected in psychopathology. For example, masochism, depression, suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, borderline personality disorder, hysteria, conduct disorder, hypochondriasis, and dissociative disorder are common diagnoses assigned to sexual abuse survivors. Once diagnosed with any of these behaviors, the victim, rather than the assailant, becomes a "legitimate object of medical control" (Stark, Flitcraft, and Frazier 1979: 470).

Sexual offenders, however, traditionally have not been diagnosed in terms of psychopathology. Rather, the behaviors of male perpetrators have been interpreted as inherent in the male gender, therefore shifting responsibility

back to the victim to keep such male impulses within manageable boundaries. Consequently, psychiatry has traditionally approached rape and sexual abuse as outgrowths of male lust, but contemporary research has begun to challenge these approaches. For example, Groth and Birnbaum (1980) draw the following conclusion about adult rapists, which also applies to perpetrators of child sexual abuse:

Rape is a pseudo-sexual act, complex and multi-determined but addressing issues of hostility (anger) and control (power) more than passion (sexuality). To regard rape as an expression of sexual desire is not only an inaccurate notion but also an insidious assumption, for it results in the shifting of the responsibility for the offence in large part from the offender to the victim. (p. 2)

To understand the politics of child sexual abuse, it is critical to recognize the dynamics of patriarchy. The five essential features presented here are fundamental underpinnings that allow for the continued existence of this problem.

Patriarchy and the Male Survivor

Many people advocate that issues related to patriarchy are relevant only to females. To the contrary, patriarchy has a significant impact regardless of a person's sex or gender. The continued prevalence of patriarchy imprisons all people, male and female, who live under its influence. Ironically, there are numerous negative repercussions even for men, including their greater social isolation and the cultural expectation that they must internalize or withhold emotions, which may account for the fact that men are likely to die earlier than women.

Male survivors remain imprisoned by patriarchy by ignoring the political realities of their sexual abuse. Their fear of losing the privileges accorded them by patriarchy (including the privilege of sexual dominance) often becomes paralyzing and contributes to denial regarding the impact of sexual abuse. Too often male survivors comply with patriarchal norms by dealing with their problems "like a man."

Anecdotal information regarding the treatment of male survivors indicates that the actual experience of trauma is connected with an incident of sexual abuse is not significantly different from males than females (Dimock 1988; Lew 1988; Strube 1989). What appears to be different in working with male survivors is the aftermath of the abuse—the ways in which males cope with their abuse experience and use treatment services to facilitate the process of their healing and recovery.

The response of male survivors reflects the values and norms by which

(and oppressor) status and encouraging them to perceive the concept of victim as antithetical to maleness. Within the constructs of patriarchy, there is considerable dissonance when members of an oppressor class talk about victimization experiences. Rather than struggling with the repercussions of this dissonance, male survivors often either remain silent or identify with the oppressor and engage in sexually offending behaviors themselves.

Several specific factors distinguish the recovery efforts of male survivors from those of their female counterparts. These factors are all related to the ways in which males are socialized to be different from females, and they create a gigantic web that entangles, and frequently traps, male survivors. It is through the interplay of these factors that many male survivors maintain their allegiance to patriarchy and therefore impede their own potential for recovery.

Identification of nine factors that negatively affect the recovery of male survivors illustrates the degree to which patriarchy moves from an abstract concept to a concrete reality that has a significant impact on the lives of many people. These factors are as follows:

1. A reluctance to seek treatment
2. A tendency to minimize the experience of victimization
3. Difficulty accepting shame and guilt
4. A propensity toward exaggerated efforts to reassert masculine identity
5. Difficulties with male intimacy
6. Confusion about sexual identity
7. Behavior patterns with power/control dynamics
8. A tendency to externalize feelings
9. A vulnerability to compulsive behaviors

Reluctance to Seek Treatment

Stereotypically, men are not consumers of mental health services. Most male survivors of sexual abuse encounter considerable dissonance as they struggle to accept the reality that a man can be a victim. The stereotype that sexual victimization is less traumatic for males than for females prevents many males from seeking help. Frequently, a male survivor who presents for treatment will have been sensitized or pushed to do so by a sexual partner or friend.

Minimization of the Experience of Victimization

Confounded by social expectations that any male can rise above his feelings and easily move beyond difficulties, many male children and adult male survi-

violated by an older adolescent or adult female fear that their disclosure will be interpreted as a rite of passage and will not be recognized as a victimization experience. When the teenage victim is a self-identified homosexual, the typical adult response is to assume that the victimization experience was merely the result of his choice of sexual orientation, which is stereotypically perceived as unfortunate. People blame the victim for his homosexuality rather than placing responsibility with the offender.

Shame-Based Personality Dynamics

Whereas a female victim seems to focus more on feelings of having been exploited—that is, the “damaged goods” syndrome—a male victim seems to focus on feelings related to his having failed to protect himself. Much effort is generally required for the male survivor to identify his feelings and acknowledge that his physical body was violated. He must put aside the protective armor that is created by his tangential focus on the assumption that his failure to protect himself makes him less of a man. Male survivors of sexual abuse consistently report a sense of internalized anger that relates directly to their perception of having failed at their manly responsibility of inflicting serious physical harm on the offender.

Exaggerated Efforts to Reassert Masculine Identity

Having failed to protect himself from an incident of sexual abuse may be internalized and reinforced by the social norm that assumes that a male of any age should have the ability to protect himself. The male survivor may overcompensate for his anxiety by using macho behaviors to reestablish a self-perceived strong male image. There is also a potential for intensely homophobic feelings or behaviors in reaction to sexual victimization.

Difficulties with Male Intimacy

An intense focus on creating a strong masculine image may undermine opportunities for closeness with other men. Too often, men assume that emotional intimacy is a female behavior. The general social norm of woman hating makes it seem risky for some men to align themselves with any attributes that are considered to be feminine in nature. Fear of appearing weak, needy, or frail contributes to avoidance of intimate self-disclosures with other males. Any setting that creates intimacy with other males may evoke intense feelings of anxiety or anger, as well as a general lack of safety.

Confusion about Sexual Identity

The male victim may assume that his failure to resist his assault is a statement of passivity, and prevailing social norms inappropriately equate passivity with homosexuality. The molester of a male child is more likely to be of the same sex (since the majority of offenders are male) than is the molester of a female child. Any self-perception of arousal or physical pleasure that was experienced during a same-sex assault may be misinterpreted by the victim as latent homosexual feelings—that is, normal male physiological responses during any sexual interaction (even during a same-sex encounter) may contrast sharply with the social message that normal sexual arousal should occur only in a male-female interaction.

Behavior Patterns with Power/Control Dynamics

Low self-esteem related to the failure to protect oneself from victimization may contribute to hypervigilance regarding control issues. Whereas a female often becomes withdrawn because of the secrets surrounding her victimization, a male is prone to externalize his energy by rigidly controlling others.

Externalization of Feelings

Social norms encourage a male to ignore or discount his feelings and discourage him from expressing his emotions openly. Social norms prescribe that it is okay for a man to act on emotions but dangerous to feel those same emotions. Male privilege sanctioned by the patriarchy provides a license for a man to externalize his feelings, which often includes abusing others. Consequently, male survivors who subscribe to patriarchal values have an increased risk for engaging in sexually offending behavior. The risk for such victimizing behavior is further increased when the survivor feels a sense of extreme isolation—for example, when he lacks a perceived confidant to whom he can disclose his own abuse experience or when he has an elevated fear that if he confides his secret of victimization, other people may doubt his masculinity.

Vulnerability to Compulsive Behaviors

Men in our society are expected to be productive, but any survivor of sexual abuse experiences emotional anxiety and pain. A perceived lack of permission for men to display intense emotions may prompt some male survivors to mask feelings through product- and task-oriented activities or through rigidly repetitive behaviors. Although compulsivity about work, materialism, sex, sports, and competition are generally socially acceptable for men, such behaviors may be an indicator of distress for the male survivor. Gender biases also mask

food. As with female survivors, males who have been sexually victimized often abuse alcohol and other chemical substances.

Male Survivors within the Context of the Women's Movement

In many ways, the nine factors discussed in the previous section create a collage of values and attitudes—norms by which males are socialized to behave differently from females in patriarchal systems. None of these factors is biologically inherent in males; rather, they emerge from the social and political dynamics of patriarchy. Again, the importance of developing a political analysis of the problem of sexual abuse is a prerequisite to effective intervention and treatment.

How we attempt to understand these political dynamics will significantly affect the analysis that emerges. In regard to the problems of child sexual abuse, it is crucial that any political analysis incorporate concerns that are important to both male and female survivors. Especially critical is the need to avoid the potential danger that the concerns of male survivors will overshadow those of female survivors. Male survivors must always remain cognizant of their heritage in the current environment of more open discussion about child sexual abuse. They must remember that there would probably be no child sexual abuse movement if advocates within the women's movement of the 1960s had not been so outspoken about the sexual exploitation of females.

As the movement to identify and treat male survivors grows, one danger is that such a focus may shift attention away from women's victimization. That shift is one of the ways in which the system could undermine change and patriarchal values could be reasserted as opposed to being addressed in a meaningful manner. A major weapon in supporting the status quo is to foment divisiveness among proponents of social change. To overcome this potential danger, it is crucial that advocates working on issues related to male victimization remain aligned with the women's movement, for it is the power and wisdom of the feminist analysis that has provided the most important energy toward identifying the root causes of violence in our society, including those of sexual abuse.

We must not be satisfied with mere reformist changes concerning a problem that is so important to our quality of life. And we must be critical in our evaluation of changes that are achieved. There is a big difference between fundamental and superficial change. Superficial change can be offered as a narcotic to circumvent demands for fundamental change. Those who wield the

power and control in our society have an investment in maintaining the status quo, and those individuals and institutions have the resources to manipulate perceptions in order to achieve a collective sense of passivity or futility regarding social change.

The American experience during World War II offers an instructive illustration of this process. Prior to the Second World War, it was generally expected that women would remain in the home in the roles of housewife and mother. The few women who did work held stereotypically defined female jobs. Suddenly the country was faced with a serious mission and a tremendous labor shortage. Government and industry combined forces to launch a large-scale and systematic media blitz to reeducate the American public that it was acceptable for women to work in factories. The norm had shifted, and it was now considered unpatriotic for women to remain at home. Government and industry even established day-care centers and child assistance programs to make it easier for women to work.

At the end of the war, large numbers of men returned home and flooded a job market that was heavily populated by females. Suddenly, the attitude of government and industry shifted, and there was an equally intense effort to persuade women to return home and resume their "rightful" duties as housewives and mothers. Day-care centers were closed and child assistance programs were eliminated to "assist" women in their transition back into the home.

As this example shows, the equal participation of women in the workplace did not reflect a fundamental change in the norms and attitudes of society. Rather, it was an expedient and superficial change in response to a specific crisis.

Similarly, it is important that the responses we formulate to the problem of child sexual abuse maintain a focus on demands for fundamental, rather than superficial sociopolitical change. Especially critical are the efforts to provide psychotherapy to survivors of sexual abuse. Traditional psychotherapy, grounded in the medical model, promotes adjustment and attempts to remain neutral and objective, an approach that is particularly problematic in dealing with a problem such as child sexual abuse. To advocate for adjustment in response to this problem is really an acceptance of psychotherapy as a covert means of social control and serves only to protect the status quo against those who would challenge it.

To be effective, psychotherapy must move beyond the rational, linear, and hierarchical interventions that are grounded in the medical model of mental illness and disease. The goal of psychotherapy must be healing and change, not adjustment and accommodation. Such a goal cannot be achieved in an environment that perpetuates the values of patriarchy but rather requires that therapy be conducted in the context of a maternal space—a psychological womb. Feminist approaches to psychotherapy offer the greatest opportunity

range of possibilities for achieving significant change in response to the problem of child sexual abuse.

Feminist approaches to psychotherapy include the following (Goodrich et al. 1988):

1. The therapist's use of self as a model of human behavior, with an effort to overcome the constraints of gender stereotypes
2. Creating a process in which the use of skills such as validation, empowerment, and demystification increases the client's sense of having options for himself or herself
3. Developing an analysis of gender roles and their impact within the context of interpersonal relationships
4. Using this analysis to promote interactions that both challenge and free the client from constricted, stereotypical patterns of behavior
5. Using techniques from other schools of thought as appropriate, but with full awareness of the gender consequences of those techniques

The Future

It is imperative that the child sexual abuse movement truly emerge as a sociopolitical movement. Efforts to address child sexual abuse will not result in significant change until such endeavors grapple with the political dimensions of this problem. Real change is not possible unless the basic attitudes, values, emotions, and socialization processes of patriarchy are confronted.

Education is a critical first step in the process of liberating our children from the oppression of sexual victimization. In this regard, prevention programs are valuable. However, such approaches are not adequate for achieving significant change. No amount of education concerning the concepts of "good touch/bad touch" or "It's okay to tell" will protect a child within an environment that keeps him or her powerless and that promotes and condones a culture of violence. Failure to examine the reality of patriarchy and the resulting politics of sexual abuse is tantamount to accepting this problem as an inherent part of our society.

If we are truly committed to ending the sexual abuse of children, we must acknowledge that such maltreatment is an integral component of our prevailing sociopolitical reality. To overcome this problem, we must try to change our future. It is essential that we move beyond the symptomatology of child abuse and struggle with the underlying issues of how to create a world without patriarchy. In so doing, we must begin to address a variety of questions that are fundamental to the interrelationship of patriarchy and sexual abuse:

To what extent can we rely on the prevailing institutions, which subscribe to patriarchal norms, to promote safety and protection from sexual victimization?

To what extent do helping professionals, within the existing norms of mental health, serve as agents for accommodation and compliance versus growth and change?

What would sociopolitical institutions look like if they were free of patriarchal norms?

What are the avenues for developing social and political policies that do not promote patriarchal norms when the individuals and institutions that currently control or decision-making processes are all so deeply rooted in patriarchy?

How do we begin the process of socializing a class of decision makers who are not rooted in patriarchy?

What would an entire society look like if it were nonpatriarchal?

To what extent can we achieve an alternative future—a future that is not rooted in the norms of patriarchy—by relying on the prevailing institutions of today?

How do we address issues related to the family as a changing institution? Specifically, if the family traditionally has been an institution deeply rooted in patriarchy, what is the role and responsibility of helping professionals in protecting the family versus their role in promoting change in the family?

As the forces of the far right as well as progressive-minded people struggle to control the destiny of the family as a social unit, how do we minimize the risk that the issue of sexual abuse will be used as a weapon in this escalating battle? Specifically, how do we counteract the growing trend to use sexual abuse laws to blame the victim, separate the rich from the poor, and ultimately reinforce patriarchal norms?

By maintaining the patriarchy, we as a society accept limitations to our growth. By choosing to give up or redefine the patriarchal system, the opportunities for change and the achievement of full personal and interpersonal potential are possible. Each of us must examine and evaluate what we are able to give up and what we are willing to gain by challenging patriarchy. Just as ignoring a child's disclosure of sexual abuse impedes his or her recovery, ignoring the reality of patriarchy impedes the elimination of this crime.

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